

1st & 2nd Timothy

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A Schematic Overview of 1st Timothy

Timothy: Instructions for Church Order & Godly Conduct in Ephesus

- Greeting & Charge (1:1–4): Paul as apostle by commandment of God; to Timothy his true son in the faith. Charge some to teach no other doctrine; avoid fables and endless genealogies that produce questions rather than godly edifying (or stewardship) in faith.
- Goal of the Commandment & Warning (1:5–11): Love from a pure heart, good conscience, unfeigned faith. The law is good when used lawfully — for the lawless, not the righteous. Sound doctrine according to the glorious gospel.
- Paul's Example & Mercy (1:12–17): Thanksgiving for being counted faithful and placed in ministry despite past blasphemy and persecution; obtained mercy ignorantly in unbelief. Faithful saying: Christ came to save sinners, of whom Paul is chief — a pattern of longsuffering.
- Charge to Timothy & Warfare (1:18–20): War a good warfare holding faith and good conscience; some have made shipwreck (e.g., Hymenaeus and Alexander delivered to Satan).
- Prayer & Conduct (2:1–15): Pray for all men and authorities for a quiet, peaceable life in godliness. One God, one Mediator (the man Christ Jesus) who gave Himself a ransom for all. Instructions for men (holy hands without wrath) and women (modest apparel, good works, learning in silence with subjection; saved in childbearing if continuing in faith, love, holiness, sobriety). Creation order and the deception in Eden underscore the relational dynamic.
- Qualifications for Overseers & Deacons (3:1–13): Desire for the office of bishop is a good work; blameless, husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, hospitable, apt to teach, etc. Deacons similarly grave, not double-tongued, holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. First be proved.
- The Church as House of God (3:14–16): How to behave in the house of God (church of the living God, pillar and ground of the truth). Great is the mystery of godliness (God manifest in flesh, etc.).
- Warnings & Practical Ministry (4:1–16): Latter times: departure from faith to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons (forbidding marriage, abstaining from meats). Exercise unto godliness (profitable for this life and the next). Timothy as example despite youth; attend to reading, exhortation, doctrine; take heed to thyself and the doctrine.
- Instructions for Various Groups (5:1–6:2): Treat older/younger as family; care for widows indeed (with family responsibility first); honor elders who rule well (especially those laboring in word and doctrine). Servants honor masters so God's name and doctrine are not blasphemed.
- Warnings to the Rich & Final Charge (6:3–21): Those teaching otherwise (supposing gain is godliness) are proud and destitute of truth. Godliness with contentment is great gain. Flee love of money (root of all evil); fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life. Charge the rich to trust in God and be rich in good

works. Keep the deposit; avoid profane babblings and false science. Grace be with thee.

This letter from Paul is This letter from Paul is addressed to one individual, named in verse 2: “unto Timothy, my own son in the faith”. It is one of the so-called “pastoral epistles”, just like the letter to Titus.

This means that the letter has a largely personal and private character. As a result, the Apostle allows himself here and there to speak rather freely and uses such strong language as he would not employ in an ordinary letter to a church. The primary focus of this epistle is not doctrinal truth, for Timothy must have known that well already.

Timothy bore a high degree of responsibility in the “work of the Lord”. Paul regards himself more or less as Timothy’s mentor, since it was the Apostle who officially took Timothy with him on his second missionary journey. Paul said to Timothy’s mother: just hand the lad over to me, and I’ll teach him a trade.

The instructions in this letter are not directed to believers as such in general, but specifically to those who carry responsibility in the church, at whatever level. It is an open letter, handed down to us, on the assumption that all believers ought to be willing to bear responsibility within the work of the Lord. In fact, therefore, the letter has no message for those unwilling to accept such responsibility or service. This is a distinctive epistle, as it gives instructions concerning the conduct of affairs in the church and even touches on certain organisational or domestic matters relating to the church, as will become evident in the following chapters.

1 Timothy 1:1

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope;

Paul opens every epistle by stating that he is “an apostle of Jesus Christ”. He does not always use precisely these same words, but it always amounts to the same thing. He regards himself as “sent by”, for that is the sense of the word “apostle”, not only by Jesus Christ but moreover “by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ”. He refers not only to the Lord Jesus but also to God as Saviour, under whose command he stands, for the term “commandment” is a military one.

Hence also “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3). He speaks several times of fighting: “Fight the good fight of faith...” (1 Timothy 6:12) and “I have fought a good fight...” (2 Timothy 4:7). It is as though service to the Lord is a matter of warfare, and Timothy is simply in that fight. The apostle Paul speaks about himself, especially in the first chapter, thereby setting himself, his own ministry, and the manner in which he fulfils that ministry as an example—even for all believers.

1 Timothy 1:2

Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

How the translators arrived at “own” I have never quite understood. They must have had some reason for it, but the word simply means “genuine” or “true”. It reads “my true son”. The point is that Paul sees Timothy as his son—not because he begat him according to the flesh, but because he begat him “according to the Spirit”, so the

explanation goes. Or so it appears, I should add, but I think it is much simpler. Timothy is regarded by the Apostle as one of his successors, and in any case as his disciple. The term “son”, or possibly “child” (Greek: teknon), is applied in the sense of instruction. Both “father and son” and “father and child” are used in this context. Thus Timothy is Paul’s child, disciple, or son in the faith, because Timothy is a follower of Paul’s faith. Believers are first and foremost expected to be followers of Christ in faith, and secondly followers of the faith as exemplified by Paul.

Then we come to the usual greeting. Paul nearly always says almost exactly the same thing: “Grace be unto you, and peace”. Only in this case “mercy” is added as well, to strengthen the idea of “grace”, for the two are synonymous. “Grace, mercy, and peace” is the great hallmark of the New Covenant. Peace means that two opposing parties are made one, for that is what peace signifies. “Grace, mercy, and peace” come “from God our Father, and from Christ Jesus our Lord”. He is the High Priest of the New Covenant, seated on the throne of grace, unto whom we draw near “that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

1 Timothy 1:3-4

As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.

The question arises whether the Greek text actually reads “edifying” (oikodomia). It looks remarkably similar to “oikonomia” (stewardship or dispensation), and according to some manuscripts that is what it should be. Then it would not be “godly edifying” but “the dispensation of God” or “God’s household administration”. It makes little difference to me, since both words derive from “oikos” (house). When it concerns the building of the house, it is oikodomia; when it concerns the management of the house, that is, the household administration, it is oikonomia. In practice there is no real distinction, but I do think it should be oikonomia. I shall not explain why, as it makes no doctrinal difference here.

Paul immediately gets to the point. He states the reason for the letter. Timothy must “charge some”—he himself stands under God’s commandment (verse 1)—with authority, therefore, that they “teach no other doctrine”. This “other doctrine” is immediately called “fables and endless genealogies”. In the epistle to the Galatians Paul had already written at the beginning of the letter:

Galatians 1:6-9

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Evidently they were preaching the law, for that is what the whole epistle to the Galatians is about. The apostle Paul strongly opposes it there. Here in Ephesus the matter seems to be heading in the same direction, so Paul uses similar language. This “other doctrine” proves largely to be the law, as verse 7 makes clear.“

Fables” are ultimately just fairy tales, but concocted in a particular way. Paul writes about this to Titus as well, his other disciple:

Titus 1:13-14

This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

Paul calls them “Jewish fables, and commandments of men”. He means the law by that—there can be no doubt. It is everything that comes from Jewish religious tradition. Peter speaks of it too:

2 Peter 1:16

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

Fables are by definition cunningly devised, that is, artificial constructs. They may have literary value, but in substance they are simply nonsense. They are nothing more than human inventions, commandments of men. Paul writes here to Timothy: they should not give heed to fables, and later in 1 Timothy 4:7 he speaks of “profane and old wives’ fables”, but we shall come to that.

The “endless genealogies” are also reckoned among the fables. Paul says of them that they “minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith”. “Endless” means “having no end”, that is, “purposeless”. They are pointless genealogies; they lead nowhere. It is not about biblical genealogies, but evidently about those of the believers themselves. What purpose could there be in delving into genealogies, and especially one’s own? It can only be to determine whether one belongs to the Jewish people. For there are people who teach that it does matter, despite the Bible teaching that in the church there is no difference between Jew and Gentile

Colossians 3:11

“Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all”.

They believe that believing Jews hold a more important position in the church than believing Gentiles. Some Gentile believers even believe this themselves, but it falls into the category of fables.

There are also those who want to know whether one perhaps descends from the ten tribes of Israel, for that might play a role even in our present time. There are quite a few in our day who think so and attach consequences to the fact that they, as far as they know, descend from, say, the tribe of Zebulun. But there are no such consequences, for there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. In any case it leads to nothing, but rather produces more questions than it builds up the believers.

Those who “give heed to fables and endless genealogies” are not believers in general, but those who teach another doctrine. Teachers, therefore. Where there is false doctrine, there are false teachers—to use a few strong terms.

1 Timothy 1:5

Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

“The end” here also means “the goal”. “The end of the commandment” is “the goal of the law”. Although the word “law” is not used in verses 3 and 5, the Apostle is

nevertheless referring to the Law and everything connected with it. That Law does not aim at “fables and endless genealogies”, but at “charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned”.

The word “out of” appears once in the original text, but the translators have inserted it twice more. That is what the verse is about. The goal of the law is love. The thrust of the Mosaic law is: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Leviticus 19:18). At that time the neighbour was every other member of the same people. In this present time that applies to the church as well. The law must therefore lead to love, but it does not say merely “the end of the commandment is charity” in the sense that if we just love one another everything will be fine. The point is that this love must come out of a pure heart. Paul says in this connection in

Romans 12:9:

“Let love be without dissimulation”.

In other words, we should not pretend to love one another. The remarkable thing is that “loving one another” can fundamentally only come from a pure heart. That is not achieved by the works of the law, but “of a good conscience” and “of faith unfeigned”.

These three terms say the same thing: it must be sincere love for one another, from our heart cleansed by Christ (Hebrews 10:22). We cannot force this love, summon it up, command it of one another, or anything of the sort. This love emphatically does not come about through the Law. The Law itself never achieves it, but the gospel, “the sound doctrine” (verse 10), does.

The causal sequence begins with unfeigned faith. Then a good conscience, and thus a pure heart, and from that flows the fruit of the Spirit, namely unfeigned love. Where love is fellowship, it is therefore unto edification, unto building up. For love is one of those expressions for the thought that all these believers, as living stones, are joined together into one building.

1 Timothy 1:6-7

From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

Some have swerved from unfeigned faith and thus also from a good conscience and a pure heart—and also from love for “the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). If one does not love the sheep, one cannot serve the sheep—that is the simple thought. Then one is “an hireling, that fleeth” (John 10:12-13).

In “vain jangling” one speaks, but says nothing. One has nothing to say, yet goes on at length. Many words pass by, but they are empty of content. How does one come to this? Because one does not have unfeigned faith and does not hold unconditionally to the Word of God. Because one does not love the brethren, in the words of John. If you asked Peter, he would say: because one does not wish to serve the flock, but to have lordship over the flock (1 Peter 5).

Why do they turn aside “unto vain jangling, desiring to be teachers of the law”? Not because it is so useful, but because it gives a feeling, a suggestion, of power. They exercise power in practice, but in a very negative way. If people cannot draw power to themselves in a positive manner, they stir up unrest. Then they also exercise power—they have influence, namely. For stirring up unrest the law proves an ideal tool. But “by

the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified” (Romans 3:20). That can only come “of faith unfeigned”.

They turn away from faith because they want to be teachers of the law. And it adds: “understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm”. That is the same thing twice. “Affirm” means “assert” or “maintain”. It concerns their “assertions”. What they preach they do not understand. Since we know how it works, we have the responsibility to keep far from it. For we know...

1 Timothy 1:8-10

But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;

(This is not explained here. Timothy is assumed to know this most fundamental truth perfectly. Moreover, he is left in Ephesus to charge the believers there to “teach no other doctrine”, and thus not to give heed to the law. That means he does not need to explain to Timothy any further how it all fits together.)

And he knows this: that the law is not laid down for the righteous, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for those who defile themselves with men, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be anything else contrary to sound doctrine.

Paulus and Timothy know that the law is good, but only when someone uses that law “lawfully”. (See the booklet “The Lawful Use of the Law” at boeken.vlichthus.nl.) Such a person then knows “that the law is not made for a righteous man”, namely those (believers) who have been declared righteous by God Himself through faith. The law is indeed for the unrighteous, of whom several examples are listed.

The law is holy, just, and good, but it must be used in accordance with the law itself. The simple thought is that the believer, by definition, does not live under the law. If he does so, that is 100% in conflict with the law. We therefore act in harmony with the law when we do not live under it. We are thus not “antinomians”, that is, we are not against the law. We “establish the law” (Romans 3:31. For we who believe, who are born again, are precisely thereby delivered from the law. We are no longer unrighteous in God’s sight, but righteous, and therefore not under the law. We live under grace, and under grace there is no place for the law. Or to put it another way: as long as we are under the law, we cannot live by grace.

Romans 8:3-4

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Through the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus, the righteousness—namely the law, God’s righteousness, God’s law—was fulfilled. He died for the sins of the world and thereby for the world and thus for all (2 Corinthians 5:15. Thereby the law was fulfilled, thereby all transgressions, sins, and crimes “received a just recompence of reward”, to

use the simple expression (Hebrews 2:2. Then the law is fulfilled, so that no one should live under the law in our day. We are not governed by the law, but by the Spirit. If one rejects the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and does not acknowledge His death for the sinner, nothing remains but to live under the law. Yet even then one does not do so, simply because it is impossible for “the flesh”, upon which that law was laid. The law is therefore laid down for the unrighteous. Of who these are, we find several in the list: the “disobedient” (or “obstinate”). In the Old Testament, through the Hebrew, it is called “stiffnecked” (among others Deuteronomy 9:6. It is to be “stiff-necked”, “obstinate”. One refuses to bow before the Lord and His Word. It is synonymous with “unbelievers”, “ungodly”, therefore. This applies to all the words listed here. The sins to which man (“sinners”) gives himself over, and of which the Bible sometimes gives a list, are always expressions of unbelief. They illustrate it. They are a type of it. This is set out at length already in Romans 1, and it appears here as well. The “unholy” reject the Holy God, the Holy Word of God, and the Holy Spirit. “Profane” seems equally clear. They acknowledge God in no way in their practical life. The “murderers of fathers” as it were murder their Father, for the Father is God, and they do not acknowledge Him. The “murderers of mothers” can in any case be applied to Israel, for the mother of the Jew is the people of Israel. One ought to honour one’s mother. The Lord Jesus said in

Matthew 15:4 :

“For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.”

Also “manslayers”, “whoremongers”, “them that defile themselves with mankind”, “menstealers”, “liars”, and “perjured persons” (a form of lying) are expressions that in one way or another can be traced back to unbelief.

The Apostle does not say of all these things that they are transgressions of the law, but that they are “contrary to sound doctrine”. That doctrine concerns love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned. Sound doctrine corresponds to sound words of God. Timothy and Titus bear responsibility for the spiritual health of the believers, and that is why such things are said particularly to them.

Spiritual health, obtained through “sound doctrine”, also has a very healthy effect upon the body. Later it will become clear that still more terms relating to health are used in this epistle. One might think the Apostle had learned something about human health. Not so strange, for one of his companions was the physician Luke. What that “sound doctrine” is, is stated in verse 11.

1 Timothy 1:11

According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

Because it concerns “salvation with eternal glory”, it is something more than merely the gospel. It is not only about the glad tidings that redemption has been accomplished in Christ. It also concerns the glory that Christ has received, in anticipation of the revelation of His glory and His kingdom upon the earth. It concerns the heavenly glory of Christ. The thought is that born-again believers actually partake of that heavenly glory of Christ.

“This is the gospel that was committed to my (Paul’s) trust”. We tend to say that this is Paul’s gospel, namely the gospel with regard to our present dispensation. That may be so, but “there is none other gospel” in our present time (Galatians 1:6-7. The apostles

preached no other gospel either. That the “gospel of the glory and blessedness” was committed to Paul does not mean it was not committed to another. He does not say: committed exclusively to me. It was his responsibility to preach it, to make it known, but not his alone, as he tells us in Ephesians 3.

Ephesians 3:2-5

If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

Paul knows that these things were revealed to God’s holy apostles—plural—and prophets, also plural. He knows he is not alone, but in the epistle to Timothy the Apostle speaks only for himself. In the next section he therefore immediately continues in the first person singular.

1 Timothy 1:12

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

Also in the following verses the Apostle continues to speak about himself, right through to chapter 2:7. While speaking about himself, he also speaks about the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul sets himself here as an example. Not so much for the church in general, but for Timothy. He speaks at length about himself so that Timothy might hold fast to it, might draw strength from it. He gives practical instruction. The Lord Jesus did the same in His public ministry. He immediately selected twelve disciples for a later ministry. For a time they received training, partly through the example the Lord Jesus Himself gave. Afterwards they certainly understood very well that this was its purpose. That is the normal way, and so it was with Timothy. He learned this ministry by travelling with Paul. The strength of the apostle Paul was not his own strength, but the strength of Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

That final “strong” refers to the power or strength of Christ in him—and thereby to the power of the grace of God. That is what Paul brings forward in 1 Timothy 1 from verse 12 onwards.

Paul thanks “Christ Jesus our Lord” that He counted him faithful for the ministry into which he was placed. What is said here is very fundamental. Insofar as anyone has received a ministry from God, it is not primarily on the basis of abilities, although it has something to do with them. Ability is no guarantee of receiving a ministry. One receives it, whatever it may be, on the basis of faithfulness. It is not about what we do, as long as we do it and keep doing it; being faithful to it. That applies to the rest of life, really. Circumstances aside, but normally speaking it is a continuing matter. If God counts us faithful, He gives us a ministry. I sometimes have the impression that this does not sink in very well.

1 Timothy 1:13

Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

Paul says himself that before—thus before his ministry—he was at least a blasphemer. He was “a persecutor”, namely “injurious” (pointing to his persecution of Christians) of the church, but also of the Lord Jesus Himself. His first words to Paul, then still Saul, were: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” Acts 9:4.

“But”, says Paul, “I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly.” He therefore says: I did not know any better, but then he adds that it was somewhat his own fault that he did not know better: “I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” Through unbelief he was therefore ignorant. Not: he was ignorant and therefore unbelieving. We tend to interpret it that way usually—not in this verse but in general. People have never heard the gospel, have never heard of the Lord Jesus and therefore are unbelievers. As far as I know, the Bible never does that. The term “unbelief” means that one has heard but does not accept. That is unbelief. That is rejection. Unbelief in the Bible is not the absence of faith. Unbelief is not neutral. Unbelief in the Bible is negative. Faith and unbelief stand opposed to each other. The one is as positive as the other is negative. Unbelief leads to ignorance. Partial unbelief leads to partial knowledge, fragmentary knowledge. Ignorance comes because one believes some things and rejects others. In Genesis 1 hardly anyone believes any more nowadays. John 3:16 people do believe, for some reason.

The Apostle says: “I obtained mercy.” That is, I received grace, but that is the next verse:

1 Timothy 1:14

And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

That “our” refers in the first place to Paul and Timothy and their Lord. The thrust of Paul’s letter to Timothy is that the same “grace of our Lord” is also exceeding abundant toward Timothy. Both are in the same position, and both must depend upon that grace, by which they both have been placed in the ministry.

The Apostle speaks here of the occasion when the Lord as it were seized him by the scruff of the neck, on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). The Lord suddenly caused him to see so much light that he became blind from it. He was of course already blind before that. He was in darkness, John would say. Paul lived under the darkness of the Old Covenant, and then the Lord showed him the exceeding abundant glory of the New Covenant. But that was so much light, so blinding, that he saw nothing. It is symbolism, of course, and what must happen afterwards is very simple. The eyes must become accustomed to the light. That is what happened to the apostle on the road to Damascus.

It was not Paul’s coming to faith, and actually not even his conversion, although he certainly made a complete turnaround in his life. It was much more than that. Here it concerns his calling to a particular ministry, for Paul was not 100% unbelieving either. He too had a partial faith. He believed a certain part of the Scripture and not another part. He drew consequences from what he did believe, however little it was, and lived by it, with all the consequences. He was willing to serve God, but he did it only in the wrong way, in his ignorance and in his unbelief. On that basis one may expect the Lord to intervene.

Afterwards I hasten to add that the Apostle then tells the following:

Galatians 1:15

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

The Lord simply let him run on that wrong track for years, and then, when that track had been followed far enough, almost to the extreme, the Lord intervened, because the Lord needed him for His service. By then the man had also learned a thing or two, and therefore I do not call it his conversion, although the word may be used, but I call it "his calling". After that there were still the necessary "training years" before he could really begin his ministry.

The reason I go into this at some length is that in certain circles the conversion of Paul is set up as a standard. In other words, if someone is converted—for it seems someone else has to do it—then the Lord Himself must do it. One must, as it were, be seized by the collar by the Lord Himself. One may perhaps wish to come to conversion, but yes, one must wait until the Lord does it. The biblical argument advanced for this is Saul/Paul. Entirely wrongly, for it was a highly exceptional event as such.

Normally it is always the other way round: "repent", is the message in both Old and New Testaments. The responsibility for conversion lies with man. He must make the choice himself. If you say, but what about Paul? Then I say: in Paul's case it was not about his conversion, but about his calling. If you read the Scripture carefully, it concerns his appointment to the service of God. That is also evident from the account in Acts 9.

Acts 9:1-6

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Paul immediately responded to the words of the Lord Jesus with:

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The Lord at once gave him commands, orders:

"Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

The continuation in Acts also makes clear that this was not about Paul's coming to faith.

Acts 9:13-18

Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately

there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

The Lord does not say: Go thy way, for this Saul has just come to faith. He says: “He is a chosen vessel unto me...” The Lord is going to use him in His service. Not: I have chosen him so that he may be saved, but so that he may serve Me. There is also Paul’s own later account of this event. In Galatians 1 he speaks at length about his “manner of life in time past in the Jews’ religion”.

Galatians 1:13-16

For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

Paul’s calling evidently came late, because the Lord deemed that better. I hold to the view that the Lord allowed Paul to continue so long on this wrong path in order to make him insensible to the law and all that goes with it. Paul experienced it in his own person. That is practical instruction.

I think that the Lord at times allows us also to walk a wrong path. The Lord permits it, since after all it is a path we have chosen ourselves. He allows it, not because we were disobedient or did not deserve better, but to teach us something. To teach us how things are not. For to experience something in one’s own person is what sticks best. I do not mean to say that everyone who is with the Jehovah’s Witnesses is there because the Lord finds it useful for them. One could never draw that conclusion. Yet the Lord can use such a period for good.

Paul regards it not only as grace that he has been saved and has received forgiveness, but also that the Lord has placed him in the ministry. In the same application we find this grace mentioned much more often by the apostle Paul. “But the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant”, for this blasphemer, persecutor, and injurious man received mercy, received grace, and the Lord took him into His service. One could wish for no better Master.

And then: “with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus”. This is one of those verses where I am inclined—at least in English—to substitute the word “faith” with “faithfulness”, because otherwise I should not know what it means. In the original text there is no different word for it. We have made these into distinct concepts, but fundamentally they are completely the same. It concerns that faithfulness of the Apostle, mentioned in verse 12. The Lord counted him faithful and placed him in the ministry. And then there follows “love”, and for the occasion I also substitute another word there. Love in Scripture is always “practical love”. It is not love as an abstract concept, though of course it is and remains that, but in particular it is the outworking of it and thus in practice simply “practical service”. I am therefore always inclined, when one encounters the word “love”, to think “service” alongside it. That is, to bear in mind—not entirely in place of it, but it belongs with it. It concerns the exercise, so to speak, of love, and then those words belong together again. “Faith and love” belong together, because it concerns “faithful service”. The thought in “which is in Christ Jesus” is that all these things come to us—and in particular came to the apostle Paul—because he has

become a partaker of Christ Jesus. We are in the same position: we are to serve God and live to the glory of God. Ephesians 2:10 says: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”.

1 Timothy 1:15

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation” we encounter several more times. It is the expression by which the apostle Paul places the strongest emphasis on what now follows. There comes a weighty declaration, which is absolutely true: “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief”.

The Apostle writes of far more than merely that a sinner is saved, that is, receives forgiveness of sins and eternal life. The term “to save” is used here in the broadest sense of the word. Salvation has to do with the entire work that God ultimately accomplishes in man. In the past, present, and culminating in the future, as described in the epistle to the Philippians.

Philippians 3:20-21

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

This is the completion of that work of Christ in us, for which He came into the world. Not so much at His birth in Bethlehem, but at His resurrection, after which “the present work of Christ” truly began. The work of the Lord Jesus did not end with His death and resurrection. On the contrary, that was when it really began. Then He was appointed Son, and “all power is given unto [Him] in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18, and He was made High Priest, responsible for the service to God.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; in practice, therefore, He came for every man. That does not mean that all sinners will be saved, but that is God’s intention. “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4. Paul counts himself “chief” of sinners. Then he says:

1 Timothy 1:16

Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

“Might shew forth” is “might display”, for the benefit of others, or better still, to others. The Lord would show His longsuffering through Paul to us in general, but in particular to Timothy. For the Lord was of course longsuffering toward Saul of Tarsus. He let him go on for a very long time, to teach him many things. But then He did call him, seize him. That is longsuffering, and it happened for demonstration. For however much one may live in enmity toward God, as long as it is not conscious rebellion, the Lord is longsuffering and will intervene. It is this Apostle who is then set forth as an example, first for Timothy, but thereafter for all believers. That is nothing new, for in several epistles he says as much.

Philippians 3:17 and 1 Corinthians 11:1

Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

“Which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting”. Just as in verse 15 salvation extends far beyond merely regeneration, so it is also with this “believe on him to life everlasting”. The thought is that we live that eternal life only to the extent that we believe. It therefore concerns the practical outworking of it. The well-known expression in this connection is probably from Habakkuk 2:4, quoted three times in the New Testament: “...but the just shall live by his faith” and thus not the unjust. It is quoted in connection with the practical life of unbelievers. In contrast, the life of faith is set before the righteous. From what do we live? What is the basis of our life? Faith—and that is a practical matter.

Hebrews 10:38-39

Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Because of the mention of the soul, this concerns practical service. “The just shall live by faith”, namely in practice.

Paul says in:

1 Timothy 6:12

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

Did he not yet have that eternal life? Yes indeed, but he was also to live that life. One was to reach out for it, to live the life of Christ. For: “...yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...” (Galatians 2:20).

1 Timothy 1:17

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The thought is that however much we may serve Him, however much we may walk in “the good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10, in short, however much we may “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling”, nevertheless it is “God which worketh in [us] both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13. And therefore “be honour and glory for ever and ever”. Our whole life should be directed to that end. The intention is that we should give that honour not only with the mouth or tongue or throat, but with our whole body, with all our members. That happens through the well-known “good works”, of which it is said that they are to the glory of the Father (Matthew 5:16).

Such an expression as in verse 17, as the apostle writes it here, as we perhaps once speak it and perhaps therefore also sing it, is really just symbolism. Have you never wondered why we sing songs of praise? It is simply symbolism; by it we express that we desire to serve Him with one accord, not only with the tongue—that we do at that moment—but indeed with our whole body; that was the intention. Corporate singing is the portrayal of that in the Bible.

“The immortal, invisible, only wise God” means that God is far, far exalted above man in general, and certainly far exalted above sinners—and also above “the chief of sinners”, as Paul himself says in verse 15.

Romans 11:33

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

We may seek it, but we shall not find it, for He is the one who reveals it. All wisdom, therefore also all truth, comes from God, is hidden in God, and He reveals it in due course to us. This revelation of the wisdom of God has directly to do with the present work of Christ, namely the saving of sinners such as you and I. As we still are today, I mean. That is the work He does in us through His Word. He makes Himself known to us, He makes us partakers of His wisdom. He reveals to us Christ, “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3. He reveals to us “Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom” (1 Corinthians 1:30.

“The King eternal” appears only once more in the Bible, and not even in the Authorised Version. In Revelation 15:3 it reads “King of saints”. That should be “King of the ages”, or “King of the aions”. The term “age” or “ages” is also used to denote principalities and powers, perhaps also the spiritual wickedness in high places. Not necessarily only the evil ones, but all powers that exist. By biblical standards “ages” are not merely abstract powers or principles, but indeed beings. The thought in “King eternal” is that the Lord holds a position above those “principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12. To Him is given all power in heaven and naturally therefore also on earth (Matthew 28:18.

By “the King eternal” we automatically understand Christ Jesus. The verse then continues by speaking of “the immortal, invisible, only wise God”. What it concerns is that Jesus Christ is God. For insofar as one can speak of God, because one knows or understands something of God, it is because one knows Christ Jesus. The attributes of the Lord Jesus Christ are the attributes of God, and therefore these terms can simply be used in one breath.

1 Timothy 1:18-19

This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck:

The Apostle returns with these expressions to verses 5 and 6 of this chapter. For there it stood: “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved...” One was to “hold faith”, that is, hold fast to it, live from it, and then have a good conscience, for that is the effect of the Word of God. It cleanses our conscience, namely. That some, having “put away” (= violently rejected) that faith and a good conscience, “have made shipwreck concerning faith” (have gone off course), does not mean that they have suddenly become unbelievers or unregenerate people. That cannot be. But they have ceased to live by faith—that is the thought. Exactly as it stands in verses 5 and 6. Timothy is called to hold fast that faith. In Hebrews 4:14 it is called: “let us hold fast our profession”. And in 10:23: “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering”.

The fighting of the good fight we have already encountered earlier. When we live by faith, we always find ourselves in the fight, for thereby we are drawn “out from under the prince of this world”. Then we stand in the conflict that is described at length in

Ephesians 6:12

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”

Timothy, who has been placed in the ministry, therefore has to do with this warfare, since he occupies a “leadership” position.

“That thou by them mightest war a good warfare” (referring to the prophecies that went before on thee) is not everyday modern English. “Went before on thee” means that they preceded his ministry. The thought is that at the beginning of Timothy’s ministry, prophecies were evidently spoken over him. In this first generation of our present dispensation there were still prophets—partly because the New Testament Scriptures were not yet available, though they themselves were produced by people who were evidently prophets. It is possible that in those prophecies something was said about his ministry. The Apostle calls these words to remembrance and says: it is intended that you should abide by them.

For it is implied by “which some having put away concerning faith” that by doing so they no longer have a good conscience. That means they know very well what they are doing. Some choose it deliberately. There are people who say: it may be in the Bible, but it does not suit me. I prefer to do it differently. They then choose another course. They do not choose to live by faith, but to live by something else.

I may assume that here it concerns people who bore a certain degree of responsibility in the church. Who found themselves in a comparable position to Paul and Timothy. Paul warns Timothy and says:

1 Timothy 1:20

Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

We do not know who Hymenaeus and Alexander were. Alexander is a common Greek name. Hymenaeus is rather more difficult. But I think we do not encounter either of them elsewhere in the Bible. Whoever they may have been, they “have made shipwreck concerning faith”. They deliberately set sail on another course. Because it was deliberate, the text immediately adds: “whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme”. Whether they actually learned it is another question.

The meaning of the expression “delivered unto Satan” is that the Apostle broke off contact with Hymenaeus and Alexander. Nevertheless he used a much stronger term, namely that he had brought them into contact with, or “delivered them unto”, Satan. The thought is that these men had themselves sought out Satan. The word “delivered”, a translation of the Greek *paradidōmi*, carries the sense of “letting go” or “handing over”. We encounter the term “delivered unto Satan” in:

1 Corinthians 5:4-5

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

There it concerns someone of whom Paul says he has decided “to deliver such an one unto Satan”. Certain contacts are no longer maintained. The idea is that thereby contact with the whole church is also broken off. One may assume that. Paul says he proceeds on that basis, but I shall not go deeper into that account now. If someone withdraws from the lordship, or the leading, of the Spirit and of Christ, he places himself in any case under the leading, or the lordship, of the adversary. There are no other options. It is either one or the other. If it is not of the Lord, then it is of the devil. It is not about the salvation of the one who is delivered unto Satan. For it says: “that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”, that is, the “day of Christ”, our appearing before “the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

A word more about “Hymenaeus and Alexander”. Hymenaeus is the name of the Greek god of marriage. The term “Hymenaeus” therefore points to marriage. Through “Pergamos” in Revelation 2:12, where this name means “heavy marriage”, and the meaning of that letter “to the angel of the church in Pergamos”, we arrive at a marriage between what we would call “church and world”. A marriage between the church of God on the one hand and the world as such on the other.

I think that Hymenaeus introduced worldly principles into what is called “spiritual work” or “church work”. Whereby a compromise was found between the two. A whole period of church history is even characterised by this. The days of “the heavy marriage” begin with the days of Constantine the Great. Then the Christian church suddenly became the state church. For centuries Christians had been persecuted, but the opponents could not win. Then a “marriage” was contracted and suddenly, in practice, Constantine the Great became head of the church. That is what it came down to in practice. Thereafter for centuries the church was governed from Rome, with worldly power. That the Vatican became a state (11 February 1929) was merely a confirmation of the long-existing status quo. In practice the Roman Catholic Church indeed functions as a state, an international nation. It is the classic example of church and world. The coming together of what belongs to Christ and what belongs to Satan. I think that Hymenaeus is a picture of that.

The name “Alexander” is understood as “hater of men”. And thus as a hater of lordship, for that is really the idea behind it. Insofar as Alexander hates men, he hates the Man par excellence, Christ. He rejects the lordship of Christ. (See also page 96 at 2 Timothy 4:14-15.) We can derive that from the name, and if you think it far-fetched, we can leave it aside. But then we do not know, and I think these names are not mentioned for nothing. These are the chief threats to Christianity.

I mentioned Hymenaeus in connection with the Roman Catholic Church as an example. In connection with Alexander I ought to do the same. The most important feature of the Roman Catholic Church is that there another head of the church has been appointed “in place of” — and that is what he is called: “the vicar of Christ on earth”. In practice Christ has been set aside. They do not say it like that, but we do. The Man has been rejected and another put in His place. That is what it comes down to. Not only in Roman Catholicism, but the same principles are found just as much in Protestantism.

1 Timothy 2:1- 2

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

The main thought in the previous chapter is that our care and concern should not go out to the world as such, but to the work of God, in which Paul is the great example. Perhaps this helps when considering the first verses of this chapter.

“Exhort” is the usual word for “comfort”. It carries the sense of “encourage”, “strengthen”, and even “help”. It is therefore not exhorting in the sense of reproof by wagging a finger. It is an encouragement to do what is written, but it is not a command. In modern English the word is used as “make sure you do this”, but in the Bible it is about being encouraged to do it. That we should actually take the liberty to do so. But the question is: why should we make “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks”—all synonyms for “praying”—for all men? What would be the point of such prayer? We pray “for all men” and also “for kings, and for all that are in authority”. Why should we do that? Because otherwise God might forget them? Some have the impression that God forgets us and that we must help remind Him. That is why I always used to wonder: why must I pray for something? There must therefore be another reason why such statements stand in the Bible.

As regards “all men”, in the first chapter of the New Testament epistles—in Romans 1, namely—it is stated with the greatest emphasis that God has given men up. He wants nothing more to do with them. There is a good reason for that... namely, they also want nothing to do with Him. And that is exactly how it is put.

Romans 1:25

Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Because they preferred the lie to the truth and honoured the creature above the Creator—in short, because they let God go—God also let them go. The Bible also teaches concerning “all men” that “one died for all, then were all dead” (2 Corinthians 5:15). Must we then pray for the dead? What would it accomplish? What would such prayer be aimed at? At the wish that all men might be saved? Yes, God does desire that. We desire it too, but it simply does not happen. Moreover: what could be done from God’s side has been done. What we might possibly do is not primarily to pray for them, but primarily to tell them the gospel.

God has therefore given up the world, which is governed by “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Why then should we still pray for it? There is a very simple reason, and it is plainly stated afterwards: “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty”. That naturally has to do with the course of events in the world. But the idea that God would change anything about it is not unthinkable, yet we have no promise to that effect in any case. Nowhere in the Bible. I hold, however, that God does indeed intervene in the course of events in the world on occasion. But I really ought not even to say that, for I have not read it in the Bible. But I think He does. One can draw that conclusion from, among other places:

Colossians 1:17

And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Christ actively does something to maintain the whole. But what and how is not stated. It is also not dependent on prayer, for He does it anyway. Another example: whether we confess our sins or not, He forgives them anyway. It is all in Scripture. We may confess them, and sometimes it is very wise to do so, but it is not therefore obligatory. That is not taught either. He—Christ—forgives us our sins, whether we pray for it or not, because

He is “faithful and just” (1 John 1:9. Because He is “faithful to him that appointed him” (Hebrews 3:2.“Supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks” may be of importance for ourselves. Why should we confess our sins? To be rid of our feelings of guilt, “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty”. Why should we pray “for all men and in particular for kings and all that are in authority”? “That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty”.

The point is that we should bring the things to the Lord. “Take it to Jesus and leave it there”, we used to sing. That is biblical. In Philippians 4 we find, if you ask me, one of the most important Scripture passages on this subject.

Philippians 4:6

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

And then? Does He then give what we need? Well, actually yes, but it is what He determines we need. For what follows in verse 7 is stated. We might expect something like “the peace of God which passeth all anxiety”. It is that, but now another term is used, to explain where those cares come from, namely: “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”. That is what we need. I find it a wonderful verse. Why is it that we are anxious? It may be a bit difficult, but it really stands there. Because we have understanding. We worry because we can think and because we can think ahead. Thereby we see things coming towards us and that makes us uncertain. They are not here yet, but still... The old saying is therefore: “A man often suffers most from the suffering he fears, yet that never comes to pass; thus he has more to bear than God gives him to bear”. Animals do not worry about what is to come, but we humans do. If you have too much understanding, you have too many cares. Hence quite a few people with too much understanding go mad. It need not necessarily be so, but the two often lie close together. Therefore: Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. Just tell it to the Lord.

1 Peter 5:7

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

The idea is that we should bring our cares to Him, for there are many things about which, from God’s side, we ought not to be anxious in any way at all. That is what this section in 1 Timothy 2 is also about. It is commended to us, by way of encouragement (exhortation), to make use of “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks”. How we get through the day—today, right now—may bring difficulties, but even then the principle holds: we should bring it to the Lord and not worry about it. At least as little as possible. For He will care for us. Not to give us an easy life, but so that we may direct ourselves to other things relating to our service in and to the church.

“Bring it to the Lord” does not mean: make the Lord a partner in your worries, but: then they are no longer your worries. In any case it concerns trust. We should trust only in the Lord. Not in circumstances. Not in our fellow men. Not in “kings, and all that are in authority”.

The great mistake in the Reformation was that men trusted in the government rather than in the Lord. That is where this “heavy marriage” comes from, which we are still entangled in. Especially the Protestants in the Netherlands have from of old placed their trust in human government. Thereby the same mistake is made as that of the Roman Catholic Church, which has long maintained the combination of church and world.

For our life of faith, for our service to the Lord, we are not dependent on the government. We should trust in the Lord. We should not look to the government, nor think that the well-being of believers would be arranged from God's side through kings and all that are in authority. I am not saying that the Lord cannot do it that way, and certainly not that He has never done so, but I say only that to trust in it is wrong. Insofar as we worry about circumstances—and I think perhaps a few among us sometimes do—we bring that to the Lord, because then we are rid of the problem and so “may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty”. It is therefore not merely about a “quiet and peaceable life”, but one that would be “in all godliness and honesty”. A life of faith and in dependence upon Him. “Godliness” is the term denoting all the blessings the Lord gives. It concerns living from all the blessings the Lord gives, and that is naturally “honest”.

Where the Lord occupies Himself with the course of events in the world, including the political world, and with “kings and all that are in authority”, it can only truly have the purpose that we may have a quiet and peaceable life. Not too quiet and peaceable, for that is also bad for the life of faith. A little difficulty is no harm.

1 Timothy 2:3

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;
What is good for “God our Saviour”? That things go well with the world, or with our country? No—that things go well with us as believers! That we as servants of Christ should live from what He gives and in His service—which is explained from verse 4 onwards. There the Apostle returns to those “all men” from verse 1, when he says:

1 Timothy 2:4

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. We know, therefore, as already discussed in connection with verse 1, that it has little purpose to pray for the salvation of all men. God does desire it, but from His side nothing more can be done. What needed to be done has been done. And man is then called to the following:

2 Corinthians 5:20

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Man is to “be saved”, to “come to faith” in the Lord Jesus Christ. “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour”.

For those who ask: which of the Three is meant here? I say: it is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is God and Saviour. Not only for us, but He desires to save all men. That is what He is intent on. “...the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe” (1 Timothy 4:10).

He desires that all men “come unto the knowledge of the truth”, for where a man comes to the knowledge of the Truth, he is saved. And then: to the extent that a man comes to the knowledge of the Word of God, to that extent he is saved. For it concerns having a share in the Truth. Being involved in it. It concerns fellowship, for “to know” is always fellowship.

Here we run into the problem that in Romans 3 it is said: “There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God”. Yet it is true that people do seek and are saved. The Bible says: “seek, and ye shall find” (Luke 11:9. But here it is not even

about seeking God, for “there is none that seeketh after God”. Bear in mind also that if one could really find God by one’s own seeking, then He would not be God. If that were possible, He would be part of the creation. The thought is therefore that we should not seek God, but the truth. What we then find is... God. For the simple reason that He then makes Himself known to us. Someone who truly seeks the truth—at a high level, I mean—will find it. For God will reveal Himself to him.

This also applies to the church and the present work of Christ. When we as believers seek Truth, we shall come to know and understand the Truth. That “truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). The thought is again: when we seek Truth, the Lord lets Himself be found. Those, on the other hand, who “received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” will “be lost”, says Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:10. And it does not stop there, for verse 11 says: “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie”. People do not want to seek the truth? Then they receive the lie, and they will believe it. It is astonishing how easily, for example, New Age teachings, those of the Maitreya, are passed on and accepted. Without any argument, without any logic. It is said, and people accept it. Whereas we have a Bible and know why we believe. That has a basis. The other is a lie, and they want nothing to do with the Truth.

2 Thessalonians 2:10 gives an answer to a problem that troubles many believers. They say: How can a man be lost because he is unbelieving, when he has never heard the gospel? That person or this person has never heard it; would a man then still be eternally lost on that account? The short answer is yes, because... if one were to seek the truth, one would find that truth. That someone has never heard it is probably caused by the fact that he has no interest in the truth. There is a connection there. The Lord Jesus once said:

Matthew 7:7-8

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

But if one does not seek the truth, pray to receive it, and knock on the door so that it may be opened, then the Truth (Christ) does not make Himself known either. Many people have not the slightest interest in truth. They will be judged according to their works.

Romans 2:5-6

But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

In our days we live under the hidden “judgment of God”, but there comes a day when it will be revealed. In Romans 1:18 it already stood: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness”.

1 Timothy 2:5

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

“God our Saviour will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (verses 3 and 4). Followed by: “For there is one God”. That is what the Bible teaches in many places. It is therefore my frustration that when you ask a Christian:

what do you believe, nine times out of ten you hear: I believe in a triune God. But the Bible teaches that there is no more than one God.

Romans 3:29-30

Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

There is but one God. There are no more; there is therefore no other choice. So if God desires “that all men be saved”, that concerns all men, regardless of any distinction whatsoever.

Then it says: “and one mediator between God and men”. That is, one mediator between God and men. That man should come to God, be saved, be reconciled to God, can only be through the one mediator. He is named in this connection: “the man Christ Jesus”. Not: God, namely Christ Jesus, and not: Christ Jesus who is God, but “the man Christ Jesus”. I say it with great emphasis. Then I read again: to reconcile man to God, the Son of God was needed. It is not true. The biblical thought is not that the Son of God was needed for that, but that the Son of man was needed for that. That even applies to John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...” But read what stands in verses 14 and 15: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life”. The “Son of man” (Son of Adam) was appointed “Son of God”. The Son of man is the One who “was taken from among men, and is ordained for men in things pertaining to God” (Hebrews 5:1. The access to God—for unbelievers to come to faith, as well as for believers who live by faith and serve God—runs through the mediator; this Son of man. As Son of God all things are subjected to Him (Hebrews 2:8. Insofar as anyone detracts from the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, he immediately detracts from His function. From what He does, from the significance He has for us. It is therefore important to keep in view that He is really Man. That was certainly not a “disguise” or a trick. The Lord Jesus is truly Man, whether we understand it or not. He became Man and He will always remain so. In the Bible I do read that He once laid aside His deity (Philippians 2), but I have never read anywhere that He laid aside His humanity.

In God’s plan the point was that a Man should be created “after our image, after our likeness” (Genesis 1:26. The Lord Jesus became that in His resurrection. There, and not earlier, appeared the Man after God’s image and likeness announced in Genesis 1. The intention was that the invisible and unknowable God should manifest Himself in a person. Namely in a Man. That is now the case. When God makes Himself visibly known, the Man Jesus Christ appears. Thereby I do not detract from His deity. The man, Jesus of Nazareth, as the revelation of the Godhead, bears the Name that belongs to it. The Name He has inherited (Hebrews 1:4. The Name that is above every name (Philippians 2:9. That is the name Jehovah, and therefore we call Him “Jehovah Jesus Christ” or, more commonly in our language, “the Lord Jesus Christ”.

1 Timothy 2:6

Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time; “Ransom” means “redemption price” and that “for all” and thus not merely for believers. For all men, for “God our Saviour will have all men to be saved”. When He did this—for all men—He was the man Jesus, but not yet the Christ. He did this as “the

Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29. “To be testified in due time” means that “in due time” it would be testified that it has happened, that that redemption price has been paid, in accordance with “the right of redemption” (Exodus 21:30). It concerns redemption as such. In the Bible that means without exception “ransoming”. A price has been paid. We were slaves and had to be redeemed. And of that testimony would be given.

1 Peter 1:18-20

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

“By the precious blood of Christ” means that it is indeed incorruptible blood, namely incorruptible life. That was determined already before the foundation (overthrow) of the world, “but was manifest in these last times”. “For you” these things are openly made known; testimony is given of them. That is simply the open preaching of the gospel.

Acts 10:38-43

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

In Acts 10 it is demonstrated that there is but one God of all men and that the gospel is therefore intended for all men. Not only for the Jews. Peter says here that it is the Jesus of Nazareth “raised the third day” who has been manifested by God in these last times. But He will not be manifested “to all the people”, it then says. He will be manifested only to “witnesses chosen before of God”. To “us, who did eat and drink with him”. God has given that He should be manifested as the Risen One, but not to the whole people. To them the Lord Jesus formerly showed signs that “God was with him” (verse 38). That happened more or less in public. His manifestation after He rose from the dead was only to those “chosen before of God”. Those were His disciples, “who did eat and drink with him”. Then this Risen One “commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead”. For insofar as He is manifested to the people, it happens through preaching. That is always the order. The Lord rose from the dead, made Himself known to His own, and they have the responsibility then to preach it. Our responsibility is also to be witnesses of it. To that end we are “called with an holy calling” (2 Timothy 1:9. We testify that Jesus of Nazareth is the One “which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead”. Thus it is preached that God has given Him all judgment. Thereby God has appointed Him Son. That term is not even used here, but that is what it is.

John 5:25-27

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall

hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. God “hath given him authority to execute judgment also”, with the addition: “because he is the Son of man”. The Heir of Adam. In effect: because He is Adam, the Man, to whom all things were to be subjected (Genesis 1).

Philippians 2:9-11

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This concerns “the Judge of quick and dead”. That cannot be mistaken, for the statement in Philippians 2 is again drawn from Isaiah 45, where it is explicitly about judgment. About the Lord who would do justice.

Isaiah 45:5, 21-25 (KJV, adapted to match the quoted sense)

I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me... Declare, and set it forth; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

What in the Old Testament was rather veiled is openly preached in the New Testament and applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. Both Paul and Timothy bear responsibility for that.¹ Timothy 2:7

Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. In connection with that “testimony” in verse 6, Paul says that he in particular has been appointed as “preacher and apostle”. That means in the first place that he was to preach the Word, and the word “apostle” means that he was “sent”. A “preacher and apostle” may be regarded as a hendiadys (a figure of speech in which one concept is expressed by two nouns joined by “and”, instead of by an adjective plus noun), and then it becomes “a sent preacher”. He has been sent with a special commission.

Then Paul makes a rather strange statement. In brackets it stands, “(I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not)”. The term “in Christ” is not here, I believe, and was probably borrowed from Romans 9:1, but that makes little difference to us. We readily believe without more that the Apostle speaks the truth. But the question naturally arises: why precisely in this verse is this expression inserted? It presupposes that he is bringing forward something unheard of, something incredible. But if we do not find that incredible thing in the verse, then evidently we are missing the point of what is actually being said here.

Romans 9:1

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

There is a particular occasion for such a statement, which applies to what follows in chapters 9 through 11. Not only is Paul convinced for himself that what he is about to bring forward is the truth, but he explicitly adds “in the Holy Ghost”. It is not merely his conviction; it is absolute biblical Truth. What he then sets forth is indeed something “incredible”, something unexpected, something unheard of concerning the promises of birthright to Israel, but also to the church. The absolute biblical truth that Paul sets forth is, as briefly as possible and not exhaustively, that the church occupies the position of a priestly people in our present time, with the ultimate destiny in heaven, after which in the future Israel itself will yet be placed in this same priestly function of sonship, birthright, heirship—but then on earth. It is wonderful in our eyes that the Jewish people—what remained of Israel—has been temporarily set aside as a priestly people, and that another people should occupy that same priestly position. Therefore the Apostle says: “I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not”.

When he uses the same expression in 1 Timothy 2:7, he uses it in exactly the same connection. The incredible, the wonderful, lies in the rest of verse 7. The remarkable thing is in the phrase “a teacher of the Gentiles”. If we read superficially, it does not stand out, for everyone seems to know that the apostle Paul preaches the gospel to the Gentiles. As if he were the only one... But here the point is that he himself is a Gentile. One can also read it as “a Gentile teacher”. We come across quite a number of statements in Scripture that leave absolutely no doubt that the official position of Paul as apostle was based on his Roman citizenship. Namely on the fact that he was a Gentile. That is originally the great difference between Paul and the other apostles. They were Jews, and Paul was also that, but he can very well pass for a Gentile as a Roman. He also emphasised that he was a Gentile, and likewise he at times distances himself from the Jews. He even does not use the word “Jew” or “Jewish” in all those verses (Philippians 3). Saul the Jew became Paul the Roman, a Gentile apostle, who officially preaches the gospel to the Jews “among the Gentiles”. In accordance with Deuteronomy 32:21:

“...by a foolish nation will I provoke them to anger”.

The official bringing of the gospel by Jews to Gentiles after the resurrection of Christ was carried out by Peter. He “was chosen of God of old” for that, as Peter himself says in Acts 15, in the presence of Paul no less. Because there were problems with the fact that Gentiles came to faith through Paul, Peter said this.

In Romans 15 the Apostle again speaks of his own ministry.

Romans 15:15-16

Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

In our translation it reads “to the Gentiles”, but in English the translation of the Greek preposition eis, depending on the context, can also be “among”. It does not explicitly say “to the Gentiles”. Paul is among the Gentiles, where he “moves”. He preaches the gospel there, in fact as a Gentile minister. Not in a fixed place, but travelling. Paul

himself is counted among the Gentiles. It is not laid on thick, but nevertheless that is the idea of “to” or “among”.

Romans 16:26

But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

The mystery of Jesus Christ in verse 25 is “made known among all nations”. And not to all nations, but among the nations.

Galatians 1:15-16

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

Not to and not towards, but as a Gentile, as sharing in the Gentiles, Paul was to preach the gospel. Paul considers himself in this ministry. God does so too: “when it pleased God”. Originally he was part of Judaism, but after the Lord called him, he became part of the Gentile world, of a Gentile people.

Ephesians 3:8

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

“Among” is the translation of the Greek *en*, the English “in”, in the sense of “belonging to”. This preposition is not in some manuscripts. But in the Textus Receptus, from which the KJV comes, it is present. Insofar as it stands, it is “in”, “belonging to the Gentiles”.

The intention is namely that the Apostle forms part of that mystery spoken of here and is also an example of it. He who calls himself “the least of the apostles” in

1 Corinthians 15:9, “less than the least of all saints”, has been given this grace to preach, as a Gentile, as belonging to the Gentiles, “the unsearchable riches of Christ”. Riches that are unsearchable, but that does not mean we cannot know them. God has revealed them.

1 Timothy 2:8

I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

That “pray” is the designation for the larger whole, of which prayer is the chief feature in the service to God. We shall do that not by lifting up hands, but by lifting up “holy hands”, for the hands were to be filled from God’s side, as with the Old Testament priests. The Lord filled their hands to serve Him.

The simplest things in our life form part of our service to Him. One should not immediately think that one must go and preach the gospel. That is fine; there is nothing against it, but the idea that this is the service to the Lord is a misunderstanding. It can be an important part, but it need not be for everyone. Also our ordinary daily life, in the home and certainly in the family and in our daily work, in whatever relationship it may be, should be done “as unto the Lord”.

Thereby they should be withdrawn from the world, whose chief feature is “wrath and doubting”. We should serve the Lord everywhere we are—that is what it is about. And withdraw ourselves at least from that wrath and doubting, from those things that are altogether common in society, on which the whole society actually turns. Nothing more is said; that should simply be clear.

1 Timothy 2:9-10

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

More is said about women, from verse 9 onwards. But to think that therein is set forth what the service of women consists in is a misunderstanding. Only a few of the most obvious things are mentioned and comment is made upon them. It is said what they should especially not do and perhaps should do.

“Likewise also” should not escape us. Likewise to what? To verse 8. It means that women also should “pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting”. Do not read over it. Paul is in effect saying: “In like manner, in the same way I will (from verse 8) that also...” Only with the women is something further added.

Only now something is added in verse 9. Namely “in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety to adorn themselves”. And then he says: “not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array”. On the basis of this passage quite a number of rules have arisen. All sorts of ecclesiastical traditions have developed from it, and yet it is not so difficult to understand what is actually being said.

In the first place “that women adorn themselves in modest apparel”. Who is to decide whether apparel is modest or not? That cannot be expressed in absolute terms. There lies the problem: it is a matter of judgment, and the problem with that is that it is bound to culture and time. It depends on when and where. That makes all the difference, and that is so here too.

What has been translated as “modest” we also find in chapter 3:2, and those are immediately the only two Scripture places where this same word is used; it does not mean honourable or something like that, or honourable, but “orderly”. That is, “according to rule”, “according to order”. Clothing so called is clothing that does not stand out, that is generally customary; that fits within the rules of society as such. The intention is namely that women should not attract attention or distract. In the first place not in the gatherings, but in general not. That is not accepted as proper in the Bible. If one wishes to distinguish oneself from others—for that lies behind the idea of standing out, attracting attention—it should not happen by outward show, for that serves no purpose, but by “good works”.

The remarkable thing is that the Apostle thereby, as it were, hooks into the natural tendency of women to adorn themselves with “broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array”. He says: you can direct that tendency in another way, namely, to adorn yourselves “with good works”. The Apostle does not therefore say that women should not adorn themselves with broided hair, gold, pearls, or costly array. Yet in some circles it is precisely said that none of this is permitted. Then you see there no costly array, no pearls, no gold—but you do see plaits in the hair... Strange, is it not? What is even more peculiar is that it works exactly the opposite way, for in this manner they precisely draw attention to themselves. They distinguish themselves from the rest of the world by dressing in a specific way. The phenomenon of “traditional costume” occurs precisely where people are conservatively Christian. They think it must be so from the Lord. In reality they are simply holding fast to traditions and are afraid of any change, and so they wear clothing that was already worn hundreds of years ago.

Orthodox Jews are immediately recognisable by clothing from a few hundred years ago, usually still originating from the country where their ancestors then lived. I have been told that the clothing worn by Orthodox Jews in, for example, Jerusalem is in reality from Poland in the 17th century. I believe it at once. But what are you to do with those thick fur hats (“shtreimel”) in a subtropical climate? Yet they wear them and do not dare to change it. It is law and it must be so.

The custom of dressing neatly when we go to a more or less public gathering is etiquette. That is a kind of law and regulation. The background to it is not that it must be so, or that it is proper, but that one should be acceptable to others and give no offence to others. As soon as one exaggerates that, it works the wrong way round. Where do those boundaries lie? I do not know. It depends on the circumstances, the time, and the culture in which one lives.

That is therefore not the intention, and that is not what stands here. What it concerns is that one should keep a “low profile”. The idea is that one should not stand out too much. One should not distinguish oneself too greatly or too exuberantly from others. I think that in principle this also applies to men, though generally speaking men have rather less need for it. It is said specifically only of women that they should not do so. In the sense “not this, but that”, “not this” does not mean “not this”. The emphasis falls on “that”. I cannot put it better, and I understand that it is difficult to follow. As an example I take another text.

Ephesians 5:18

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Here it does NOT stand, in the imperative: be not drunk with wine. Here it stands that being drunk with wine is a type of being filled with the Spirit. And it is the latter that matters. Here is another example.

James 2:1

My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

“Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ” is grammatically a complete sentence. But that is precisely what you should have... Yet it stands thus. Only there follows “with respect of persons”, in the sense that these two things do not belong together. There are plenty of examples of such sentences in the Bible. They begin with not this, but that. Whereby the first is not condemned or forbidden, but whereby it is said that the first is a picture of the other. And that is also the case in 1 Timothy 2:9-10. It really does not say that women may not adorn themselves with plaits and the like. Those things are not forbidden here at all. It only says that it should be done “with shamefacedness and sobriety”. And then it says that preferably, if they adorn themselves, they should do so “with good works”. That tends to greater honour and endures. What endures is not the outward, but the inward. Those good works are the expression of what is inward. That they are the greatest ornament. Not only for the woman, but for the man just as much.

1 Timothy 2:11

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

This is a further explanation of what precedes. The general thought is namely that the woman should never be dominant. She should not dominate. Not by, for example, drawing too much attention in the way mentioned in the preceding verses.

The word used “let” expresses a good deal of passivity; “silence” and “subjection” (evidently to the man) also carry that meaning.

The point is that there is indeed an important difference in the ministry of man and woman, in the service to the Lord. The man generally—at least in general—has the responsibility to learn, that is, to teach. Certainly from the Word, and the woman does not have that responsibility. That stands not only here but in other places as well. It is neatly explained. Nowhere does it say that they could not do it, but in general it says that they should not do it, because by doing so “she steps out of her position as woman”. More strongly put: “she denies her womanhood”. Whether you like it or not, the biblical thought is that in the relationship between man and woman, the woman is the receptive party and the man the giving. That is expressed among other things in the bearing of children, but also in many other matters in married life. This basic relationship continues in the practice of the church as well.

There are various reasons for it, but the most important is naturally that this corresponds to the nature of both man and woman. And in the relationship of one man with one woman—in marriage, therefore—you promptly find it reflected. For although under English law it is no longer so, the man is nevertheless the head of the household. After that, you and I know that nothing in this world is perfect and that there are exceptions to every rule. But it concerns the general norm. Not one that comes from outside the Bible, but one that we simply have in the Bible. It is a biblical given, which has application not only in the marriage relationship but throughout society as such. From of old there has always been the struggle of women to obtain a position equal to that of men. The intention of that is simply that they should no longer be subject to the man by definition. That is really the whole idea.

These “creation orders” are naturally always contested. Wherever there is de-Christianisation of our society, it is common for this sort of thing to be contested and opposed. But in the Bible those relationships and positions remain as they are described.

1 Timothy 2:12

But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

How sharply it is suddenly stated here after all. “To teach and to usurp authority over the man” are not two things, but one thing. For the thought is that the one who teaches, who imparts teaching, who gives instruction, in a certain way “rules”. Someone who gives instruction exercises power. If you find that too strong, I say: someone who teaches exercises influence. The one gives instruction and the other receives instruction. Thus the one who gives instruction is “the ruling party”.

The Apostle therefore has specifically in mind that the woman should not teach the man, for she should “not usurp authority over the man”. The word “man” stands only once. In the other clause you can also insert it, and then it reads: “I suffer not a woman to teach the man, nor to usurp authority over the man”. That leaves room for the woman possibly to teach other women, for nothing is said against that. That is not what it concerns. It concerns the mutual relationship of man and woman, but also in the assembly, in company the woman should not teach the man. In general, therefore, women should let themselves be taught, let themselves be instructed, and not the other way round.

There is moreover another thought, which I should like to mention. The Apostle evidently assumes that this statement here in general is regarded as a great relief for women. For they do not have to. They therefore do not bear the corresponding responsibility. Certainly in the days when the epistle was written, it was not proper for a woman to speak in public. If they did, it was not well regarded. That is the polite version. The less polite is: then they were called whores. It must therefore have been rather pleasant for the women that they did not have to speak in public. We find a parallel statement in 1 Corinthians 14:34, where it concerns the chaos in the gatherings of the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 14:33-35

For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

Remarkably, the women are not even addressed themselves. It is said to the men, but not with what now stands. That italicised “commanded”, which is not in the original text, should not be there at all. If you want to insert something in that place, it is the word “permitted”. The sentence then becomes: “for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but permitted to be under obedience”. This is a matter of language. The verb is omitted because it already stood in the preceding clause.

Verse 35 then says: “And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home”. Why? Because it is permitted to them to be under obedience. And if they have no husband of their own? Then it becomes the brother or father or another man. Why? “For it is a shame for women to speak in the church” and thus in a more or less public gathering. Afterwards it is said: yes, that was so then, but it need no longer be so now. Then I say: well, I am not so sure about that. I think it often still looks unseemly. Understand me rightly: it depends on how large the company is. If you are in a larger gathering and suddenly a woman gets involved, I think it looks unseemly. It is a disturbing factor and does not seem to me the right way.

In 1 Timothy 2:12 the translators do exactly the same. They insert an omitted word because it has already been mentioned earlier. They insert a much stronger word: “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but [I will] that she be in silence”. But that “will” is not there. The sentence then becomes: “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but [I suffer her] to be in silence”. She should regard it as a favour. As a relief that she does not have to. And then there follows a kind of explanation of what has just been said.

1 Timothy 2:13-14

For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

The biblical thought is that the one who comes first is higher in rank. It occurs often in the Bible. Thus we learn from the epistle to the Hebrews that the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ is higher in rank than that of Aaron. He is “an high priest after the order of Melchisedec”, and was in history earlier than Aaron. It is therefore regarded as older and thereby having higher rights. The same applies thereby to the New Covenant. That is higher in order than the Old Covenant, because the New Covenant, in the promise to

Abraham, was announced long before the Old Covenant. It therefore concerns rank. In that connection it stands: “For Adam was first formed, then Eve”. That is a matter of chronology, but at the same time it becomes a matter of rank. Adam stood above Eve. Conversely: Eve was to be subject to Adam. Then the statement is applied to man and woman in general.

In verse 14 the same thing happens as I explained with verse 9: namely the first anticipates the other, and it concerns the other. “Adam was not deceived” does not mean that Adam was not deceived. He certainly was. We should never have thought that Adam was not deceived, but we would if we read this verse wrongly. The thought in this verse is that the woman is more easily deceived than the man. For the woman is regarded as more receptive than the man. Therefore she is more easily persuaded to something, because of that receptiveness, or gentleness. I regard it as positive feminine qualities, but they do have disadvantageous sides. In any case the “serpent, which was more subtil than any beast of the field” (Genesis 3:1 knew that very precisely. He therefore did not try to deceive Adam, but he directed himself to Eve with the idea: if I get that woman, she will in turn deceive her husband. And so it went. I think that was the plan, and so it still works in practice. In some circles they know that very well. You must influence those women, then you get the men along naturally. The reasoning, coming from a woman, which I have read, is that Christianity only became great after the woman had obtained a prominent position in it. For then it suddenly became attractive to women. After that the men will come along, was the idea. That woman is Mary. So since the woman stands at the head, has become “Queen of Heaven” (established in the encyclical *Ad Caeli Reginam* of Pope Pius XII in 1954), and is in fact the one through whom one should approach the Lord Jesus, according to Roman Catholic teaching. You do not go directly to the Lord Jesus. You do it through that woman Mary, who is of “the conception”, the receptive woman—I mean it in many respects. One should approach her. She will then arrange it with her Son or with God.

That this is cited here is not because the woman is obliged to be subject on account of Eve being the first to go wrong—as a kind of curse or condemnation or something of the sort. What it concerns is that thereby “from the beginning” it has been demonstrated that the devil in the first place makes use of women, after which the men follow. That is still the situation even in our own day. Why therefore should the woman not teach and have authority over the man? Because she would in any case become the prey of the devil. Satan would set great store by the woman possibly occupying the position of overseer in the church, for he can more easily seize hold of her. Approached from the other side, it is therefore all the greater a victory for the woman that she does not need to expose herself to those dangers.

It is not surprising that well-known heresies and quite a number of rather strange deviant religions have been founded by women, as one hears. In occult circles it is precisely women who occupy the leading position. That simply means that the adversary takes advantage of the receptive feminine nature. And that is why she is expected to be “in silence”, to be subject. So that the devil should not conduct his affairs through her. That is simply the idea.

From verse 14 some draw the conclusion that Adam was not deceived, because when he sinned he would have known exactly what he was doing, they say. Eve was deceived and Adam then simply chose the side of his wife, just as the Lord chose for His fallen creation and took sin upon Himself—that is then the idea. But that is not what Paul

intended with this verse. It is absolutely not about that, and therefore one should not read it into the text.

This thought is linked to the deception of Adam, in the sense that he was persuaded to do something of which he did not know the consequences. As though he had been tricked. To be deceived, however, means that one is persuaded to do something of which one does know the consequences. Eve also knew exactly what she was doing when she was deceived. That had been explained to her earlier as well (Genesis 3). “God hath said”, said Eve. We have no reason whatever to assume that she did not know what it was about when the devil presented her with a choice; it is all set out at length. Eve was not stupid.

To be deceived means that one is going to do something that one does know. One is persuaded, encouraged, urged to do it anyway, but one knows what one is doing. Adam was deceived in exactly the same way. The message of the serpent to Eve was passed on by Eve to Adam; he was therefore not the first to be deceived. Adam even had two deceivers. First the serpent, and then also his wife. The thought is simply that both Adam and Eve were deceived. But in the Bible it is said that by one man—Adam—sin entered into the world, and by sin death (Romans 5:12).

The thrust of the passage is that precisely because the man is easily deceived by his wife, therefore the woman should not lead—then she cannot deceive either, is the idea. That is why it is said of the woman: “I suffer her to be in silence”.

1 Timothy 2:15

Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

In some churches this is also taken very literally: the woman must bear children—but that is certainly not because it stands here, although this verse is indeed used for it. The real reason is something quite different. If you cannot convert other people with the gospel and yet you want to maintain your own denomination, then you must ensure that many little children are born. Then you must especially develop a theory, a philosophy, a theology, that says the child is incorporated into the church at birth. Into “the covenant”, but that is a trick; they mean the church. In practice these are regarded as the same thing. Verse 15 is abused for that: the woman must bear children, for that is what the Lord desires, and so forth. That is therefore not what it says.

The thought that follows on from “I suffer her to be in silence” is that the woman is permitted to occupy herself with the things she would naturally occupy herself with, in her position as woman. She can remain in that. She is not responsible for anything else. It is only placed on a higher level. For the thought is that everything the believer does—not only the woman, but also the man—everything we do, we should do “unto the Lord”. If the woman were to say: I must bear children and my husband may serve the Lord, then she has understood nothing of it.

One more thing: by biblical standards the woman does indeed bear children, but she does so “to the man”. Children are regarded as the children of the man, not of the woman. The woman “bears to the man” children, heirs, both boys and girls. Thereby this specifically feminine work is indeed regarded as done in subjection to the man.

Thus: “she shall be saved in childbearing” and all the other feminine activities that go with it. That is encompassed in that one term. She should, just like the man, continue “in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety”. That is where it began in verse 9: “In like

manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety..." It concerns knowing the boundaries, and that applies to both women and men. We should "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12)

1 Timothy 3:1

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

After speaking about men, and more extensively about women, we now come to the overseers and the deacons. These are two categories of people who bear great responsibility in the church. The first category is dealt with in verses 1 through 7. The deacons from verse 8 through 13. In this connection two "offices" are spoken of. These are not described in detail; at most some very general guidelines are given, and for the rest it is a matter of filling in and making use of the circumstances that exist. If we are looking for laws and rules, then we are in any case in the wrong place in the New Testament. The whole church has been placed in freedom to serve one another through love, thanks to Galatians 5. The same undoubtedly applies also to the overseers, as well as to the deacon. Nevertheless a distinction is made here between the two offices. The important difference between "overseer" and "deacon" is that the overseer is directly responsible for the ministry of the Word. That does not apply to the deacon. That is really about the only distinction.

In verse 2 it is said of the overseer that he must be "apt to teach". He must be capable of giving instruction, whereas of the deacon more or less the opposite is said. Of him it stands in verse 9: "holding", which means "keeping", "holding fast", "the mystery of the faith (explained in verse 16) in a pure conscience". That is: he is not expected immediately to speak. Of course that can never be forbidden him, but it is not required of the deacon. What is expected of him is that he does know the things concerning the great mystery—the church. One must after all know what it is about, not only when one gives instruction, but also when one does not do so but still bears responsibility within the assembly. For if that is not the case, there is a great chance that the devil will make use of it.

The overseers are also servants—"deacons"—of the church; Paul says in Colossians 1:24-25:

"...for his body's sake, which is the church: Whereof I am made a minister..."

A deacon is not yet an overseer, but an overseer is indeed a deacon. The term "deacon"—"servant"—has in the first place to do with household service, of an organisational kind. Those who are responsible for that are at any rate called "deacons". If they are also responsible for the ministry of the Word, then they are possibly also called "overseers", but just as much deacons. The problem is namely that this sort of terms—there are still a few—have been taken from the Bible and have acquired a specific meaning in ecclesiastical contexts. Agreements have been made about what meaning should be given to them. And so the deacon has become someone who goes round with the collection bag, as I understand it. Perhaps he does more, but this is the best known.

In Protestantism the elders are the members of the church council. "Elder" is a biblical term and fully synonymous with "overseer". That is where the problems arise, for overseer, "episkopos" in Greek, has been corrupted in English into "bisschop" [bishop],

someone who oversees something. In the Bible an elder—older one—is the same as an overseer, as a bishop, but in ecclesiastical contexts these are terms that denote completely different offices. Moreover it is difficult to call a bishop a deacon any longer, for in practice such a one is more a church prince than a church servant. That is absolutely in contradiction with the words of the apostle, and of “elder” Peter in 1 Peter 5:3: “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock”. Thereby it concerns “leaders”. Such a one “goes before” and thus is an “example”. It does not concern going before with the Word.

Then we have the more or less Dutch term “dominee” [minister]. I have been told that it is Latin for “shepherd”, but in the Bible a shepherd, who “leads to green pastures”, is the same as an overseer and as an elder. In the Bible the distinction between elders and the minister does not exist at all.

1 Peter 2:25

For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

According to Peter “bishop” is in practice the same as “shepherd”, and thus also the overseer of 1 Timothy 3:1. Where does it appear that we as believers could possibly desire such an office, for of course it remains the case that we live by grace and that we serve Him voluntarily? Peter says about it: “...but willingly; ... with a ready mind”. The other side is whether the Lord also desires it. In any case it depends on both. One may also have “desire” for it, for “a good work”, and thus it concerns good works in which we as believers in general should walk. That means that we take responsibility upon ourselves, and bear it, to do certain things. It concerns the performance of a function, another word for that weighty word “office”. If you have that function, you must bear the responsibility for it.

Someone may then desire “a good work”, but what now follows is the anticlimax, for high “requirements” are set.

1 Timothy 3:2

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

- ...vigilant...
An overseer then must be “vigilant”. If you have to oversee, you must naturally be watchful, in the figurative sense. He must be alert. Otherwise things happen that are already getting out of hand before he notices. And that only makes his work more difficult.
- ...sober...
An overseer then must be “sober”. He must know his limits. For anything that goes beyond measure, anything that is excessive, will hinder him in the faithful exercise of his function, which is one of twenty-four hours a day. If he is sober, he is “of good behaviour”, that is, “honourable”.
- ...given to hospitality...
An overseer then must be “given to hospitality”. In those days one had to be able to provide lodging if necessary for brothers or sisters who needed it. There were also travelling servants who ministered the word in various churches. As an

overseer one would grant them hospitality. One should read the third epistle of John. You can easily find those things there at any rate.

- ...apt to teach...An overseer then must be “apt to teach”. It is one thing to articulate and pass on certain truth. It is quite another to pass it on in such a way that another person, or a company, understands something of it.

Not everyone can do that.

1 Timothy 3:3

Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

An overseer then must be “not given to wine”, for thereby he can get into trouble. The same applies to “no striker”. That has to do with licentiousness. And anyone who is after money will in any case have problems in that office, so “not greedy of filthy lucre”.

- ...patient...An overseer then must be “patient”. Anyone who is not patient and wants emphatically to be involved in everything will of course also get into trouble. For that does not belong to the function.

1 Timothy 3:4 -6

One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil

An overseer is someone “...that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity”.

Keeping children “in subjection” is one thing, but doing so “with all gravity”, in a good spirit and preserving that spirit, is quite another. If one cannot rule one’s own house, one will in any case get into trouble. And then such a nice parenthesis: “(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)” It would have been obvious if it had said: how shall he rule the church of God. But it says: “how shall he take care of the church of God”. “Rule” is not the right word in that connection.

Therefore, in view of the foregoing, it stands in verse 6: “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil”.

Not someone who has only recently been “in that way” (Acts 24:14. In the first place because he does not know the ropes, does not know the culture. But also “lest being lifted up with pride”. That stands for “pride”. Being puffed up means: one presents oneself as greater than one is. One feels oneself to be something, and that is precisely where the devil wants the human being in general, and the child of God in particular, and the overseer even more particularly. Being puffed up is something the devil personally invented: I feel so much. I am so great. I will be as God and I will be even more than God.

A novice who is given so much responsibility is soon puffed up. That is how it is in the world, and unfortunately it also happens among believers, within the framework Timothy is speaking of here. Moreover, if that novice becomes puffed up, he will think he must rule. In society that may be necessary, but in the church precisely not. If one comes into pride, and thus into being puffed up, then one comes into the power of the one who rules the world, the devil. Hence the repeated call to humility in all the epistles.

The call to service, to submission, to readiness to suffer. Then one cannot fall into this “condemnation of the devil”, is the idea.

1 Timothy 3:7

Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

“And he must also have a good report of them which are without...” There are always more outside than inside. I mean it figuratively. It is very difficult to have a good report from those who are without. If only because those who are “without” are not believers. It is not to be expected that unbelievers will give a good report of a believer. It does happen, but then one should at least ask whether it is justified. For if a believer has a good report from an unbeliever, it may well be that there is something wrong with that believer. The chance that someone who serves the Lord and the church receives a good report from those who are without is very small. But the problem is that if he does not receive that good report, it will only make his work more difficult.

1 Timothy 3:8

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

“Deacons” are “servants”—that is what the word means. It has not been translated but simply left as it is. It is Greek and transliterated, because it concerns servants in a special function, namely within the church. It has probably also been done because in ecclesiastical contexts a specific content has been given to the concept. After that translation becomes rather more difficult.

Servants in the church should, like the overseers, “be grave”. You do not qualify if you are “doubletongued”. If you speak with “one tongue” in one direction and with “the other tongue” say other things. The serpent has that habit, and it undoubtedly refers to that, for it concerns not falling “into the condemnation of the devil”. That stood for the overseers in verse 6. The same applies to “not given to much wine”, “not greedy of filthy lucre”. That is therefore largely the same.

1 Timothy 3:9

Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

“Holding” is “keeping”. It is not holding the faith in a pure conscience, but “holding the mystery”. The mystery is everything to do with the work of God, from the first coming of Christ until His return. For that concerns the hidden things. “The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (among others Matthew 13:11). The thought is that these deacons must know and keep that mystery. That has everything to do with faith, for hidden things can only be known through faith in that Word of God. The things mentioned here in verse 9 are therefore highly elementary. He must know the mystery as such. He must know that faith, but also live from it. Trust in it, to use another word. The deacon must trust in that hidden work of God, namely the gathering and building of the church. That is what this epistle is about.

That knowing, keeping, holding fast, the deacon should do “in a pure conscience”. That is connected in Scripture with the heart. The working of “the conscience” is a function of what in the Bible is called “the heart”. The thought is that a conscience is naturally impure in the natural man, but of believers it is said that the conscience is purged. Or

rather that the heart is purged from an evil and thus impure conscience by the Word of God (Hebrews 10:22).

1 Timothy 3:10

And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

“Let these also first be proved” is “upon proven suitability” and then they can be deacons. In the service to the Lord it is always about faithfulness. Not so much incidentally, but that one bears the fixed responsibility for things, so that it does not have to be arranged every time. That can be beautifully illustrated by the Old Testament priesthood. If one is a priest, one is so for life. That is so with us too. We have become priests “after the power of an endless life” (Hebrews 7:16, in following the Lord Jesus Christ. That always remains so. But before you impose a fixed responsibility on someone, you should first find out whether someone can handle it, whether he is suitable for it, writes Paul to Timothy. In 1 Timothy 5:22 Paul says: “Lay hands suddenly on no man”. That means in this case: “do not transfer responsibility”. The explanation follows: “neither be partaker of other men’s sins...”, of the “failures” of others. With some people those failures are public before one “lays hands on them”, figuratively meant, and then the hands should therefore not be laid on. For that can never go well.

1 Timothy 3:11

Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Notice that it does not say “their wives”. That could perhaps mean it as far as I am concerned, but it says “the women likewise”. Notice the “likewise”. The women should also “be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things”. Those are the same words that are used throughout. The same requirements are set for them. First it concerns overseers. Their wives are not mentioned. Then it concerns “the deacons likewise” and then “the women likewise”. It concerns female deacons. I can say it easily, because a large part of chapter 5 also speaks about it. Only there it concerns women who are alone, who need assistance and would come upon the church. In contrast to that stands that they serve the church.

1 Timothy 3:12

Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

That is said in the same way as of the overseers.

1 Timothy 3:13

For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Those who have well fulfilled their service as deacon, as servant, who have therefore been at it for a while, obtain for themselves “a good degree”. That is “a step”, or “a path”. We would probably say “a good entrance” in English, and that seems to me the right translation. “A good entrance with others”.

It is a simple matter that is brought forward here, but it is not generally known. If one serves the Lord well—in the Bible that is always “faithful service”—one gains self-confidence, self-assurance, and then I quickly leave out the word, for the Apostle

evidently takes pains to avoid it. Therefore it stands: “boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus”. So self-confidence is not really the right word. But the point is that if one fulfils one’s service well, if one proves capable of bearing the responsibility, then indeed, humanly speaking, it gives self-confidence. Only the Apostle immediately corrects it and says: “boldness in Christ Jesus”. “To purchase to themselves a good degree” means that one has boldness and knows what one is doing. That means that one is proof against criticism. That one is oneself convinced and that one is doing well. That makes one steadfast, and that is necessary in a fight and in a hostile world. Then one must not doubt oneself. Normally we call that self-confidence and that is its effect too. However, it is not about confidence in oneself, but confidence in the Lord, confidence in Christ Jesus. One does indeed derive boldness from that. If in a secular position you can do your work well, do you not derive boldness and self-assurance from it? That makes it easier to deal with others and to bear criticism. Because you yourself know it is in order. That is what it is about and that is what is said here. It is evidently important for both overseers and deacons.

1 Timothy 3:14-15

These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

“If I tarry long” means: as long as Paul is not with Timothy, I write him this epistle with instructions. “That thou mayest know” means that Timothy will at any rate know it well after this epistle. The rest is his responsibility.

“Behave thyself” means “conduct oneself”. Not only Timothy, but evidently also believers in general, for that is spoken of further in the rest of the epistle. The church is after all “the house of God”. It is even called here “the church of the living God”. That means that God actively occupies Himself with that church. We should also be conscious of that. It is not our church, except in the sense that we belong to it. But that is all we have, for individually we are God’s possession, who has bought us, or rather redeemed us, therefore set us free. We are His possession. God is busy with a work in the church. We can and should have a part in it, but it is never our work as such. You can calmly say on occasion that it is our work, for the apostle Paul does so too. But then in the sense: it is a work in which I bear responsibility in connection with what the Lord has evidently given me. But all in all it always remains the work of God. We should be conscious of that. It also means that we should conduct ourselves accordingly in the church. This epistle is about that conduct. With instructions for Timothy himself and then for overseers and deacons.

“The church of the living God” also means that it is not a human organisation, but a living organism in which divine life is present. God therefore governs that organism. That is the idea we encounter in so many other places, when the church is described as the “body of Christ”. Whereby there is of course organic connection between the members of the body, but whereby they should all be governed by one and the same Head and by no one else.

Then it stands of that church: “the pillar and ground of the truth”, whereby “ground of the truth” is the explanation of the concept “pillar”. The church holds fast—the intention is—the truth, and to that end the church is here among other things. If someone seeks the truth anywhere on earth, he yet comes to the church. Then one should abide by

what one “heard from the beginning” (2 John 1:6. That is the responsibility we have as children of God. We may therefore never say: oh, I need not know it all, I shall see later. If everyone said that, every believer, then the church cannot even fulfil that function of “pillar and ground of the truth”.

Paul and then Timothy are responsible to keep that truth, hold it fast, preach it and pass it on to those who are also able to pass it on again. So that there comes a line of “successive overseers” who hold fast and keep the truth. In Hebrews the same church is spoken of. In 3:2 it is said that Moses was faithful over “his house”, namely “the house of Israel”. “As a servant”, deacon, it stands there. In verse 6 it stands: “But Christ” is faithful, but that last is omitted because it already stood in verse 5. Christ is faithful as a Son over His own house. “Whose house are we”. That is the church, but something more stands here. There follows a practical condition: “...if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end”. The thought in Hebrews 3 is that we do theoretically belong to His house, but in practice it is only if we “hold fast firm unto the end”. The thought is that the Lord is faithful to us, to you and me, only if we are faithful to Him, and “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2. That is to keep our future expectation directed to the goal: our future glory in heaven. When that is so—in short, when we live by faith, and are also practising as servants of the New Covenant, living under the reign of grace—we also belong in practice to His house.

1 Timothy 3:16

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

The statement in verse 9: “Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience” is only explained here, and that in connection with the term “truth” at the end of verse 15.

Verse 16 then begins: “without controversy great is the mystery of godliness”. We must not forget that this concerns the church and how one should conduct oneself in it. And also that the church is “the pillar and ground of the truth, as the house of God”. That is why “without controversy” stands here—in other words: what now follows, that is what it is all about, what should be preached, what should be preserved, because it is specially “present truth” 2 Peter 1:12.

Then follows the rest of the enumeration, which has already begun with “great is the mystery of godliness”, but because in one way or another the mystery was not known at all, the word “God” has been inserted here in this verse. Although there are manuscripts in which the expression occurs, it is agreed that it does not belong there. We can therefore strike it out. If we leave it in, the problem is that everything after the word “God” must be applied to God. But the point is that this whole enumeration is not about God, but about “the mystery of godliness”. That “is great” and that “was manifest in the flesh”. That “was justified in the Spirit”. That “mystery of godliness ... was seen of angels”. That “was preached unto the Gentiles”. That “was believed on in the world” and “was received up into glory”. This is a neat list of seven points concerning that mystery, namely the church of God.

The expression “God was manifest in the flesh” is of course a very popular one for proving the deity of the Lord Jesus. But apart from the fact that the Bible teaches that the One who “came in the flesh on earth” was precisely not God in those days, the expression “was manifest in the flesh” is not about God. Jesus appeared as man in

servanthood and humility. Nor is it even about “flesh” in the sense of “a fleshly body” that appeared or came. The original, at any rate biblical, meaning of the word “flesh” does not stand for a body, though the word is sometimes used in that sense, but for “material”, for matter, tangible visible things. That is always called “flesh”. It is not necessarily the flesh the doctor looks at or the butcher deals with. The machinist also speaks of “flesh”, but then it is about iron.

The concept of “becoming flesh” is also translated as “bringing a message”, preferably “a glad message”, and that is based on the Scripture passages in the Old Testament where the word “bazar” is used for “flesh”. It concerns the message that was expected, that would one day come. When it comes, that message has “become flesh”. For the announcement of the “birth of a child and the giving of a Son” (Isaiah 9:6 promised by the prophets, men waited long, and when the report comes that it has taken place, that is called “glad tidings”. The thought behind the word “bazar” is: what was to be expected, or what was promised, has now been realised. In other words: what was promised has “taken shape”, has “become flesh”.

When God has spoken, He has spoken about the future, and the intention is therefore that one day that Word which God has spoken will be fulfilled and thus “become flesh”. And so we encounter the expression in the Bible in:

John 1:14

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

That does not mean that the Lord Jesus was “the Word” of old and has now appeared on earth in bodily form. It simply means that God from the beginning has spoken and made promises concerning the coming of the Messiah. What was announced in the Old Testament “was made flesh”. God has fulfilled His promises in Christ, the risen Lord Jesus. This statement therefore does not concern the birth of the Lord Jesus. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us”. The promise of God has “taken shape” when the Lord Jesus Christ “rose from the dead” on the day of resurrection and “was declared to be the Son of God”. To be precise, for forty days, from His resurrection to His ascension, His glory was then beheld. “The glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” has come through Jesus Christ and has been beheld by many (1 Corinthians 15:5-8).

The fact that the seven expressions in that enumeration can rather easily be applied to God, and through Him to the Lord Jesus, is clear. That is simply because the whole mystery is firmly fixed in Christ.

Colossians 2:2-3

That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

We automatically arrive at the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:7

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

This statement as it stands—or at least as it should stand—is not a statement about the Lord Jesus Himself, but about that “mystery” and thereby about the mystery of the kingdom. God’s promises concerning a New Covenant, a New Creation, have been

fulfilled. Those promises have taken shape, have been materialised. Men waited long for it, were in glad expectation, but in the meantime it has been realised. They have “become flesh”.

“The mystery of godliness ... was justified in the Spirit”. The thought is that all the work of God, whatever it may be, is in one way or another “justified”, that is, “declared righteous”. The whole work of reconciliation that God accomplishes in Christ for the world rests on the righteousness of God (Romans 3).

“The mystery of godliness ... was seen of angels”. If this had concerned the Lord Jesus in these verses, one would have expected: “seen by men”. But instead this mystery is seen by angels.

We, after all, form part of the heavenly things, and so do the angels. Where God does a work in us hidden from the world, that is indeed seen by the angels. Moreover, our position will be “equal unto the angels” (Luke 20:34-36. In Ephesians 3:10 it is said: “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God”. Hebrews 12:22-23 says: “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect”. The epistle to the Hebrews (1:13-14) teaches that angels are “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation”. That is us, therefore. That angels thus “see the present work of God” seems clear enough to me.

1 Peter 1:11-12

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

Peter speaks here of “the mystery”. He does not use the term, but he does say that it was revealed. Peter speaks of the time—I put it popularly—between “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow”. That is our dispensation. These things, “which things the angels desire to look into”, are made known. Some read the verse as though the angels cannot look into them, but that is not what it says. Can one not “desire to look into” something while one is busy looking into it? Those angels see us.

We receive a position in “the ranks of the angels”. A considerable part of those angels, who evidently now also see the work of God, will within a foreseeable time be cast out of heaven (Revelation 12). And we, who are already seated with Christ in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6, will on that occasion also be actually “promoted” to heaven and more or less take their place.

“The mystery of godliness ... was preached unto the Gentiles”. I suspect that the expression does not even mean “to the Gentiles”, but “through the Gentiles”, because of the use of “among the Gentiles” and that this still happens. But that does not take away from the fact that the Bible teaches that in the days of the apostles the gospel, right from Acts 2, was already preached among all nations and throughout the whole world (Romans 1:8; Colossians 1:5-6, 23. It happened within one generation, and that was also the intention, because the preaching of the gospel is from God’s side the official

proclamation that His promise has been fulfilled and that His Man sits on the Throne since the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. That the world must know. After that the choice is man's. So it was with David too. God chose him first, and then it was waiting for the time when the people would also choose him. That there are now nations that do not know "the mystery of godliness" is because they have forgotten it. How can that be? Because they had no interest in it.

It will strike you how even children of God are capable of simply forgetting biblical truth because they have no interest in it, and so they lay it aside. That is simply how the Word of God works. It does not attach itself unless we actually open our hearts to it. If that applies to believers, it applies equally to the Gentiles and to the world.

"The mystery of godliness ... was believed on in the world". Notice that it does not say: was believed on by the world. It was indeed preached in the world, but not believed on by everyone in that world. Only by a minority—that is what it comes down to.

"The mystery of godliness ... was received up into glory". The mystery of godliness is the church, and then the question naturally arises: has the church "been received up into glory"? Yes indeed, only not yet bodily. According to 1 Thessalonians 4 the church will be received up, caught away, "to meet the Lord in the air". But the point is that we are already "received up into glory".

We already share in the glory of Christ, and we should be conscious of that—that is the intention. On that basis we should look forward, not to the bringing about of that glory, but to the revelation of that glory in which we are already received. That is what is said here very briefly. But it is also said to Timothy. He is as it were once more impressed upon his heart that these are the things it concerns. This is the present truth, from or in which we should live.

1 Timothy 4:1

But the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

The first verse of a new chapter begins with the conjunction "but", which expresses contrast with what precedes. "But the Spirit speaketh expressly" that "great is the mystery of godliness", but the Spirit also speaketh expressly "that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith". Those "latter times" are the times of "the mystery of godliness". That appears at any rate from other Scripture passages. The latter times, or these last days, which we render as "the end times", have applied since the days of the first coming of Christ. That is from His resurrection. Those latter times are in the Bible simply connected with the revelation, the appearing, of "the Lamb of God".

(Note: "devils", in the plural, does not occur in the Bible. There is only one. Where the Authorised Version has "devils", it is in Greek "demons". So here it concerns "doctrines of demons", the lowest kind of personnel the devil has in the spiritual world.)

1 Peter 1:19-21

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

"These last times" are "the times of the Messiah". Regardless of whether that refers to His second or first coming, for that distinction is not generally made in the Old

Testament at all. In the New Testament a distinction is nonetheless made, namely between the last days in general, and more particularly “these last times”. We find the expression in much the same way in Hebrews 1.

Hebrews 1:1

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son; “These last days” are distinguished from the last days that begin with the return of Christ. These last days in particular begin with the first coming of Christ, and those other last days with the return of Christ. These two events mark the history of salvation. We therefore live in “these last times”, of which the Spirit expressly says that “some shall depart from the faith” and thus let go of the Word of God. The first thing to be let go is these teachings concerning “the mystery of godliness”. All somewhat serious heresy is based on not knowing the present position of the church. After that there is also departure from that unfeigned faith (1 Timothy 1:5-6.)

When faith is a theoretical faith, without its working out in our practical life, then we run the risk of coming to “seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils”. It does not say in verse 1 that seducing spirits give heed to believers. It is precisely the other way round. They do so through “departing from the faith”. By excluding their practical life from biblical and church truth. Then one naturally comes to the devil and thus to his personnel, for in any case the devil is our great adversary. But also: we are adversaries of the devil when in the practice of our life we are willing to serve the Lord. He is accustomed to all men serving him, and when we withdraw ourselves from that, he turns his attention to us. If we let go of that faith, we naturally come to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. That is the situation of the world.

Where so few believers have even the slightest notion of what Scripture teaches—sorry if that sounds harsh, but I mean it sincerely—there is naturally also little that they can even believe in. What one does not know, one cannot trust in either. That is why so many end up with “seducing spirits and doctrines of devils”. And if you say that is strong language, I say yes, it is. But it is of course simply confirmed when in the following verses the most characteristic doctrines of devils are examined more closely.

1 Timothy 4:2

Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; The demons from verse 1 are here called “liars”. They will certainly be people who speak these lies, but they have not invented them themselves. They are inspired (possessed) by these seducing spirits. The point is namely that the conscience simply does not work when it is not used. That is true of everything in nature. What one does not use—atrophies, whether muscles or anything else—and can eventually do nothing at all. If one does not use one’s conscience, it is as it were “seared”. It no longer functions. The fundamental working of the conscience is that if one is sincere, the conscience will help us, or lead us, to know or recognise the truth.

Psalms 112:4:

“Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness...”

Scripture assumes that we as human beings are naturally capable of recognising the truth, and thus the Word of God, as such. We would say: that is intuitive knowledge, but it is the working of the conscience. If a person makes it a habit, or has the tendency, to reject truth, then that person loses the ability to recognise truth as such.

“Having their conscience seared with a hot iron” is a very strong expression and falls within the scope of statements such as those in Hebrews 6.

Hebrews 6:4-6

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

They may not have turned away in theory, but in the practice of life they have turned away from the truth, and thereby lose the truth. When in the practice of life one turns away from the Lord, one comes into a situation where the Bible in effect says nothing more, whether someone is a child of God or not.

1 Timothy 4:3

Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

When one departs from the faith, one departs from grace and then one comes to the law. It is either law or grace. In this verse only two examples are given of laws that have been used over time. They are named by Paul as dangers, for they are demons that “forbid to marry” and command to “abstain from meats”. “To marry” concerns “sexual relations”, which would be forbidden. If you want to make a career in the Roman Catholic Church, it begins immediately with “forbidding to marry”. I take the Roman Catholic Church as an example, because everyone knows something about it. You find it elsewhere too. Can you imagine? One would want to serve the Lord, the church—for that is then the claim—but the first thing that happens is that one is placed under laws and rules. You have to keep to them, otherwise you are out. So it often begins immediately with very heavy law, concerning the whole of life.

Then they say: we do not forbid it, you must voluntarily wish to live celibate. Yes, yes... That is not only so there, for in quite a number of so-called religious circles and movements this abstaining from sexual relations is regarded as a sign of holiness. But here it stands: those are “doctrines of devils”. For they have an interest in precisely imposing laws on the child of God, so that they become by definition unfit to serve grace.

“Commanding to abstain from meats...” In our present time that occurs a great deal. The modern form is that quite a lot of food available in the shops is supposed to be bad for people. That health hype is a trend in the world, but it has evidently also penetrated into Christianity. In some circles it is even popular to conform to the Jewish food laws. Non-Jews then join the lifestyle and the laws that apply under the Jews. They believe in the Lord Jesus, but nonetheless live under the law. If you were to summarise the Jewish law, it comes down to abstaining from meats derived from the Mosaic law, under which many kinds of food were declared unclean and forbidden for Israel to eat. The popular modern explanation is then: they were not allowed to eat those things because they are bad for man.

When it comes to abstaining from meats, it primarily concerns meat. In the days of Paul and Timothy, not because there was anything wrong with it, but because as a fixed rule the meat was ritually slaughtered and offered to idols. Those are therefore demons. On

that basis one should not eat that meat, was the idea with some. So again one comes under law. According to others it concerns only certain kinds of meat, after the pattern of the Jewish law, under which certain kinds of meat were completely unclean. Then there is also the vegetarian variant, which says that all meat is in any case not good, because a murder must be committed to eat it.

Paul says, however, that in all cases it concerns meats “which God hath created to be received”. That is “for use”, to make good use of them. However we think about it, God has also given man meat for food. That was from Noah onwards. The thought is that God has created these things “to be received with thanksgiving”. God hands them to us and He expects us to thank Him for them. That applies to the whole of life and everything that goes with it. “Marriage and meats” are in practice the most essential for maintaining human life. Both things are therefore named in the Bible as indicating the whole practical life of man.

They are therefore “seducing spirits”, demons therefore, that forbid to marry and command to abstain from meats. There are those who consciously seek demons and think that there are also good spirits among them. They are wrong. Some see in those demons spirits of deceased people, but sometimes also simply gods. So they are occasionally regarded, even in the Bible. Paul says: if one sacrifices to idols, one sacrifices to demons (1 Corinthians 8). When one seeks contact with these non-material beings, it soon appears that one begins to abstain from sexual relations and from meat. One must at any rate eat vegetarian from then on, and not occupy oneself with carnal lusts in general—that is more or less the idea. That is also biblically explainable, for where man in the days of Noah occupied himself with seeking these spiritual beings, the Lord after the flood, and after that judgment on that then world, said that man should eat meat. Evidently that makes us less receptive to these spiritual beings.

For what God has “created to be received” we should be thankful. We thank Him for it, in everything. It is in any case intended “for them which believe and know the truth”. That means “have fellowship with”. Have a share in the truth and know it, recognise it, and confess it as such.

1 Timothy 4:4-5

For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

The thought is namely that insofar as these things would be unholy or unclean, they become holy because we receive them. We are nourished by them and we are children of God. We are saints in Christ Jesus. When they become our own, these things are precisely thereby sanctified. Concepts of clean and unclean are namely not at all physical qualifications. When in the Bible something is said to be unclean, it does not mean it is bad for man or that it is contaminated. It is regarded as unclean. Probably things are only declared unclean because of the figurative, the spiritual, meaning that some things simply have. Therefore they are regarded as unclean, but in themselves they are not unclean. It concerns the thoughts, for symbolism means that certain thoughts, certain truths and ideas are connected with certain things. Pork is unclean under the Jewish law and under the Mosaic law too. There is a good reason for it, because the animal wallows in mud and always roots in the earth. A man would not do that. One should direct oneself to what is above, to the Word of God (Colossians 3:1-2).

“Seeking in the earth” is in that comparison unclean. That is the only reason and apart from that there is nothing wrong with those animals. It is purely the symbolism attached to it. That makes it possibly clean or unclean. In other words: it is in our thoughts. Some have allergies to certain nutrients, but that has nothing to do with uncleanness. Too much is in general not good. Too much eating either. Even concerning honey, a picture of the Word of God, it stands that one should not eat too much of it (Proverbs 25:16; Revelation 10:10).

Romans 14:14

I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

The biblical thought is that clean and unclean are concepts that exist only in the thoughts of man. If you regard things as unclean, see them so, yes then they are unclean to you. If you nonetheless make use of them, you will probably have trouble with your conscience.

Then someone asked: may you then also smoke? Then I say: yes, if you thank the Lord for it. Then I am serious. That is the consequence and then I need not go into the theme as such at all, whether it would be bad for man. There are so many things that are regarded as bad. There are also so many things that are regarded as good for man and then it turns out afterwards that they were bad after all. Whatever happens, we live from His hand and thank God in everything. Tobacco too is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

The Scripture says: if we know the Word of God, then we know that no thing is unclean in itself. Not even things sacrificed to idols. For we know no idols. We are delivered from that; that plays no role in our thinking, for we live according to the principles of the New Creation.

1 Timothy 4:6

If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

“These things” in verses 1 through 5, for these are the most essential matters for the practical life of the child of God. And then also the section about the elders and deacons, the position of the church as the house of God and as the pillar and ground of the truth in chapter 3. Timothy should “put the brethren in remembrance of these things”, and thereby any others who serve with the Word as well. That is what the preaching should consist of, if I may put it rather strongly. And conversely: we as brethren may expect that these things will be taught to us. If these things are not taught to us, then something is wrong. Then it means that we should draw consequences from it.

The word “minister” is again “deacon”, but it will be clear that this is not a reference to the deacon of 3:8, but more to the overseer of 3:1. It is after all service. The point is not whether a message is preached that the church or the believers value, but a message that the Lord values. A message that would be preached in His name. One should be “a good minister of Jesus Christ”. That one is “nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained”. It concerns biblical teaching, and that has everything to do with faith. With trust in God and thereby also in the work of God.

Not only what He has done in the past or will yet do in the future, but also the work of God in our present time.

Unfortunately only a few have any idea what God is doing in these days. The idea is precisely that God is doing “a good work” in our days. That He “hath begun a good work in you, [and] will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6. In that work of the Lord, which should have an effect in our thinking and also in our practical life, one should trust.

This passage describes what it means to be “a good minister of Jesus Christ”. That is how it should look. In verses 7 through 9 we find the activities of the servant (in verse 6) described. In verse 10 his motives, or in general his motivation. What drives him and why he does the things he does. From verse 11 and 12 it concerns the responsibility, the duty, of the good servant, followed by the plan he makes, the direction in which he works. The manner in which he does things. It is not only theory, but also a practical matter.

1 Timothy 4:7

But refuse profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

The activity of the “good minister” should consist in “refusing fables”. For the world is full of fables, that is, lies. By “fables” we think of a certain literary form, but that is not the intention here. It concerns fairy tales and even worthless fairy tales, however much they may form part of some culture. I have nothing against fairy tales and would even like to speak once about the meaning of well-known fairy tales. About the symbolism, for that is how they were also written. But well, we have something else to discuss, namely the Bible.

The Apostle does not refer to children’s fairy tales, but to teachings of people who are supposed to teach high wisdom. Things that are taken seriously. Matters that fall within philosophy and certainly also within theology, but precisely those things are so dangerous for man. That is what Paul warns against.

Colossians 2:8

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ;

“The profane and old wives’ fables”. “Profane” means that God has nothing to do with them. The translation “old wives’” should have been “Greek”, for it concerns Greek fables. The word used there can be explained as “like an old woman”, but it can also be understood as “Greek”. I think it should be read as “Greek fables”, because Scripture elsewhere speaks of “Jewish fables” (Titus 1:14. Timothy was a Greek, so that is obvious. The Greeks have a very extensive culture and philosophy that has been handed down to our own day. The Apostle says of it that they are fairy tales, Greek fables, and that Timothy should not immerse himself in those things.

Timothy should “exercise himself unto godliness” and thus in the words of faith and good doctrine. To exercise is simply to be occupied with it. It is training, so that one develops one’s powers, abilities.

1 Timothy 4:8

For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

“Bodily exercise” is taken as an example, because everyone can understand that. If one takes the sentence fully, it reads: “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but the exercise of godliness is profitable unto all things”. People train their bodies to become strong, to be beautiful, or to hold back ageing. There is some profit in bodily exercise, but then very limited. It is limited to bodily things. Godliness, which one should exercise, is on the other hand profitable unto all things. There stands a beautiful general statement behind it: “having promise”, for exercise promises a certain result, “of the life that now is, and of that which is to come”. Exercise of the body promises at most something for the present life. Exercise of godliness promises something for both the present and the coming life, and also for the present life. If a man is at odds with himself and walks around with problems, that will undoubtedly have a very unhealthy effect on the body. The reverse is also true. There is nothing so healthy, even for the body of man, as that he is spiritually in order. By which I give no guarantee that he will not become ill or die prematurely. For that is of course not how it lies. It is all very relative. But a general condition for health is in the first place exercise in godliness. Dr Paul Tournier, popular in the sixties, wrote a book about this, with the thrust that if a man, a believer, is unfaithful to his Lord, and thus clearly withdraws from the will of the Lord, that has an immediate effect on health. In many cases people simply become ill from it directly and sometimes very seriously. I think that is correct, though one should not absolutise it and draw the conclusion that if one serves the Lord, one has eternal life in this body.

We all grow older and that is also the intention, for it is not the intention that we remain in this body too long. (See the PDF of the book “Radical therapy”, Dr Paul Tournier.) It is not a guarantee that one lives long. But it is that as long as one lives, one indeed lives healthily. That is, the exercise of godliness has an effect on metabolism. Most somatic complaints do indeed have a psychological cause. Doctor Paul Tournier gave the example of boils. That also belongs to psychosomatic complaints. He established that the bacteria that cause boils are generally carried by every human being. But why does one get boils and another not? That actually has nothing to do with those bacteria, but with whether one has resistance to them or not. Whether one has resistance to the enemy depends on the body’s own strength. So it has to do with what I popularly call metabolism. That is indeed influenced, just like our whole bodily household, by our spiritual condition. When people are in psychological problems, they get all sorts of bodily complaints. If only a cold, to which they suddenly become susceptible. Also a matter of bacteria, we say then, you can be vaccinated against that. It is all just an idea. It may work a little, but it has to do with the resistance we have, the strength we have. The strength from which we as children of God live, the strength of the Spirit of God, the strength of the Word keeps us psychologically healthy. I would rather say: it keeps us spiritually healthy and that has a very healthy effect on our bodily household.

1 Timothy 4:9-10

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

(Note: the words “and suffer reproach” stand there, as far as I know, not. It is a known error. The words do not form part of the exposition.)

Naturally this refers back to the preceding verses. For however doubtful those words may seem according to human standards, nevertheless it is “a faithful saying” and

worthy to be accepted. We shall accept it and also give it shape in the practice of our life. In connection with that “faithful saying” the Apostle speaks in verse 10 of the motivation of “the good ministers of Jesus Christ”. “For therefore we both labour”, that is heavy work, “because we trust in the living God”. We trust in the living God in the sense: we rely on the living God, the active God, for the present and thereby also for the future, and hence the word “hope”. That is determining and the motivation for our service to Him.

What this passage especially concerns is that “the living God is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe”. That stands there, does it not? So... “He saves all men, but specially believers”, so that it is clear that a distinction is made, regarding that salvation, between mankind in general and believers.

If you take it as He cares for all men, you have no problem. Then it is “He cares for all men, but specially for believers”. There is nothing difficult about that at all. For such a statement naturally does not give the right to say that God therefore ensures that all men will ultimately be saved. I say it this way because this is an obvious verse in support of the so-called “doctrine of universal reconciliation”, “universalism”. Then one says: God is a Saviour of all men, full stop. But that is not what it says. It says: “God is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe”. What does Scripture teach about that?

Colossians 1:16-17

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

God causes things to “stand”, but here it stands: “by him all things consist”. That is, He preserves the world now. Not for ever, that is not added either, but it is indeed so that the world as it exists is kept in being by God. Therefore I do not worry about a hole in the ozone layer or anything like that. We invented that ourselves first and then we worry about it. That is typical of man, with his so-called intelligence: he can worry and that is what he does. “All things consist by him” applies of course to the whole creation. He holds the world in His hand (“He’s got the whole world in His hands”). People draw comfort from that. Rather wrongly, because God does indeed have the world in His hand, but He will one day crush it. Wrongly people think that it means it will all come right by itself, and that perhaps man will be saved by himself. But that is not so. The world (= the cosmos) as it exists is kept in being by God, because He has a plan with it. That world must, according to that plan, last at least another 1,040 years.

Acts 17:24a, 28a

God that made the world and all things therein...

For in him we live, and move, and have our being...

In Him believers and also unbelievers exist. For no one has “life in himself”. All life in creation is life directly from God. If theoretically God were now to cease to exist, then we would cease to exist on the spot. Then the world would cease to exist. Scientists are still searching for the origin and beginning of life. They all have theories about it. For if you are a bit intelligent, you should be able to develop a few theories. But of course they do not find it, for that life is life from God.

God is therefore a “Saviour of all men”, for “to save” means “to keep in being”. To ensure that it continues to exist. Then the Apostle says “[but] specially of those that believe”.

That is exactly right, for there comes a time when God is no longer the Saviour of all men, but then still of believers. That is one thing. The other is that God's children—believers—form part of the New Creation and that is something far more and higher than the old creation. If God already ensures that man is kept in being, then He will certainly do much more for those who actually serve Him.

God ensures in this time that the world as such continues to exist, but that is then also the least. That is where it stops. I know that some claim that all kinds of misery that comes upon man is sent from God's side, as a kind of punishment for sins. Whether that is for a whole people, or for the whole family, or only for an individual. Those theories are held to. When in 1953 Zeeland and part of South Holland were flooded, that was in heavily orthodox areas, and it was of course immediately explained as a punishment from God. But the Bible says that is not so. It teaches that God has let the world go, and in Romans 2:5 it stands: "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath". So not now. God does not punish now. We live in our days under the reign of grace, under the New Covenant. God is a gracious God and does not intervene now. Thereby everyone gets the opportunity throughout his life to call upon Him, to submit to Him, to come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The preaching of the gospel to all men is directed to that. But if one is unbelieving, one is not saved.

John 3:15-18

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Not because someone is a sinner, but because he does not believe, he is "condemned already". Because he did not come to faith "in the name of the only begotten Son of God". Conversely: whoever believes has eternal life and is therefore saved. He does not come under judgment.

1 Timothy 4:11

These things command and teach.

"Command these things, namely teach them". "Command" is a military term, also in Greek. It concerns giving orders. Then he says it rather more mildly: "teach them". In the sense of instructing. But the thought is that these are the principles for the Christian life and for the church life. Therefore we must know them and we should maintain them for ourselves. That is our responsibility.

1 Timothy 4:12

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

(Note: "in spirit" is not in the original text.)

From this we can infer that Timothy was quite a young man, and then I think Paul must have said to all those others that they should not despise the young Timothy.

Nevertheless he writes it to Timothy, and he obviously cannot prevent it, so the only thrust can be: they may think you too young, but pay no attention to it. Instead: "be thou

an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity". That normally falls to the older ones, but there are also young people from whom one can take an example.

"Be thou an example of the believers" stands there, and not for the world. That is also such a foolish idea, that believers should be an example to the world. Not at all, but indeed to the believers, in what you speak, but also in the manner of life as such. Not only in theory, but also in practice. Then it stands "in charity", and that must be so, otherwise the whole example does not work. It always has to do with love, affection, fellowship. If one takes an example from another, there is fellowship. Then there is a bond, a connection. "Charity" is indeed what one should call it. If that is not there, then no example is taken either, and giving an example also does not happen where there is no love

People often think far too superficially. Namely, what someone does, one should imitate. But it concerns deeper things. It concerns more in general what one does and how one reacts to circumstances. In that there should be an exemplary function, and that in connection with long-term things. In Hebrews 13 the same Apostle says it rather more clearly.

Hebrews 13:7

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

Who are those who have the rule over you? Those "who have spoken unto you the word of God". "Whose faith follow". That is an exemplary function and that should be reasonable. One should also look somewhere. Not at "the end of their conversation", for in the Authorised Version that "their" is italicised and that means it is not there. Here there is an "apposition", a figure of speech in language whereby two words are used for the same thing, without a conjunction between them. It stands: "considering the end of their faith, and that is their conversation". Someone's manner of life is always the outcome of someone's faith. Or unbelief, it makes no difference. What someone does, and how he experiences things, is what someone's manner of life really is, and that again has directly to do with what he believes.

Whether one takes an example from Timothy is not in the first place his responsibility. His responsibility is that he fulfils that exemplary function. That he is an example.

1 Timothy 4:13

Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

"Give attendance" is "keep at it". Just stubbornly continue. First in reading aloud and thus reading out, then "exhortation" (in the sense of encouraging speech), then "doctrine". Reading aloud from Scripture of course. In those days hardly anyone had a Bible or what passed for one. The written word was very precious and not everyone possessed it, and hence the reading. "Doctrine" is giving doctrinal instruction. Dogmatics, biblical teaching. That is not a matter of: what do you think of it, but of: that is how it is. It begins with reading the Scripture; one should take in the words of God, then be encouraged and urged from them, and finally one is instructed in those Scriptures. Paul says: keep at that "till I come". Probably afterwards too. Timothy should be faithful to his ministry, even when no one stands above him. He should continue with it, and then it is gone into more fundamentally.

1 Timothy 4:14

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

People make a great mystery of this verse, but there is nothing mystical about it once one understands what a “gift” really is. Then one would understand the term “laying on of hands” and then also the term “presbytery”. If one does not understand those three, usually not, then nothing remains of such a verse.

In the Bible a “gift of the Spirit” is never the ability one receives to be able to do something, but the responsibility to do it. I cannot put it more clearly. Sometimes it is to do what one cannot, but then one must learn it. It is just like with “a job”. One gets it because one is expected to be able to do something. Then one has the responsibility to do it.

Paul received his ministry, his position, on the basis that God counted him faithful to be and remain so. Therefore He gave him responsibility. He was expected to be able to bear it. His gift did not consist in his suddenly knowing all biblical truth by heart. He had to study hard for that and then go over his homework again. Then he received this responsibility, which he also calls a gift.

Ephesians 3:8-9

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

In verse 14 that responsibility is given to Timothy. “Neglect not the responsibility that is in thee” and which thou therefore bearest. “By prophecy” means that from God’s side indeed that gift was given to him, that responsibility was laid upon him. What that prophecy precisely consisted of, we do not know. But I may assume that since the apostles, including Paul, were also prophets, God spoke through Paul to Timothy. “With the laying on of the hands of the presbytery”, I read differently. I put a comma before “of the presbytery”. That is perfectly logical, for what gift is in question here? That “of the presbytery”. What is the verse about? About “the gift of the presbytery”. This expression is split and between them something or other is said about it. There are many more verses in Scripture like that. It has nothing to do with the council of elders. Just as Paul laid hands on Timothy—I assume figuratively—so Timothy in turn will lay hands on the next generation, namely give responsibilities. The usual course of things in the church is the transfer from one to another. Not from below, for democracy is rather a modern affair, but from above. The master chooses his companions, chooses his disciples and says: I do not want that one, give me this one. That one must then serve the master, help him in everything and so learn the trade. He receives instructions, becomes increasingly independent, and then becomes a partner, or a competitor.

1 Timothy 4:15

Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

His thoughts should therefore be determined by that. That “profiting”, within the function of the presbytery, points to a certain growth, and that is to be expected when one is still young. Thereby the Apostle really returns to “let no man despise thy youth” from verse 12. Perhaps something more needs to be added, perhaps one must still

learn something, at any rate gain more experience, but that is the advantage of being young.

1 Timothy 4:16

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

“Take heed unto thyself” and not unto others, as one might think, for an overseer should oversee, and thus take heed to others, to the flock. “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine” one should regard as one whole. Timothy should take heed to himself, control himself, that he remains faithful to the Word of God, for that is the intention in that function. Then you can have a lot, and at any rate you remain standing. Thereby “thou shalt both save thyself”, at any rate in that function, and also “them that hear thee”. If the overseer, the elder, is himself not faithful to the Word and to the doctrine, then he himself fails and thereby also those who hear him.

Acts 20:28

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

That is a nice one, for it immediately states who appoints those overseers or elders. Not the church, but the Holy Ghost does that.

After this we come in chapter 5, where it stands above “Instructions for the church life”. They are not that. They are recommendations addressed to Timothy about how one should arrange certain matters in the church.⁵

1 Timothy 5

1 Timothy 5:1-3

Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity. Honour widows that are widows indeed.

Timothy has to do with people of all ages in the church, whom he should treat as though they were his family. We all as believers form part of one and the same household and are at any rate expected to be family. Those who are older than he, he should regard as fathers and mothers, and those who are younger as brothers and sisters. From verse 3 no fewer than 14 verses concern widows. One can conclude from it that widows evidently form a problem in the church. This is therefore a very long passage, because “widows” are not merely the women who no longer have a husband and in general are very needy. There is much more to it. “To communicate... for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Hebrews 13:16 concerns not merely individuals who stand in a special position within the church, but the whole church, and that is also the background of this passage.

“Honour widows that are widows indeed”. In verse 17 it concerns honouring the elders. The word “honour” therefore means much more than merely “hold in high esteem”. The word literally means something like “determine value” and thus it concerns “recognition of” and “care for”. That is also the background of the expression “honour thy father and thy mother”. Elders should be supported, also financially, for that is the meaning of verse 18. Here in verse 3 “honour widows” means that they must be supported,

because they are without a source of income and without care, for that is the limitation of “that are widows indeed”. That is immediately explained in verse 4.

1 Timothy 5:4

But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. Children and grandchildren (nephews in the older sense of nephews and nieces) must first learn to support their own family, for that is “to shew piety at home”. Within the church this is regarded as service to God. If one wishes to serve the Lord, it begins with care for one’s own household and then, rather more broadly, care for one’s own family. That is always as far as possible. In Deuteronomy it is already spoken of that one should care for the family.

James 1:27

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

It is “pure religion before God”, not the only one, but because this is what first expresses itself outwardly. The idea is that we as children are entirely under the care of our parents and live at their expense, and that when the parents in turn become needy, they come upon their children. Nature itself provides the right insurance, is the idea. By biblical standards someone is therefore blessed if he has many children. They can later care for him nicely. There are always difficulties one can think of—man is very good at that—but the principle itself should be understood. Having and raising children is regarded as an investment that should later yield a return. That is the responsibility of the children, and that is called “to requite their parents”, namely “to repay”.

Widows do not automatically come upon the Christian community, but in the first place upon their own family—that is the intention.

1 Timothy 5:5

Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

“Desolate” in the sense of “left alone”. Such a one is “a widow indeed”. What it then concerns is establishing for whom believers together might possibly care. That is not automatically for all who are needy, but only if there is no one who can care for someone, then that one qualifies. Something more is added, namely “trusteth in God”. That does indeed have to do with the spiritual disposition. It stands in effect: “Whoever trusts in God continues in supplications and prayers night and day”. We are inclined to exaggerate the expression “continueth in supplications and prayers night and day”, but in the Bible it means that one is night and day dependent on God and always trusts in Him.

1 Timothy 5:6

But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.

It comes down to the fact that there are those who immediately go looking for someone who might care for them. Paul says that this is not good. Such a one is “dead while she liveth”. One loses contact with that, and Paul does not regard her as qualifying for the care of the church.

1 Timothy 5:7-8

And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

“To be blameless” stands in contrast to “if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house”. Followed by a very hard statement: “he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”. The thought is that we as believers form part of a household, a family, a house, for we are cared for by the Lord Himself. Therefore care for one’s own household is the first Christian virtue, for God does this too, even for the world as such. What Christ does for His church, as Head of that household, is the Christian duty for a believer who wishes to serve the Lord.

1 Timothy 5:9

Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man,

Do not absolutise the ages, for it concerns an indication. The term “be taken into the number” is rather unfortunate, for for what purpose would a widow be chosen? If you choose one, you leave a few out of consideration or they are not chosen. One should translate that word as “put on the list”; that is the literal meaning of the term. In the King James Version it therefore stands: “be taken into the number”. The thought is that there would be a “list”—it need not be literal—of those who are dependent on the church for their support.

The normal biblical thought is that those who are supported should on their part contribute to the church. Since it is a matter of mutual interests, one could not or should not accept just anyone, for you bring the Trojan horse into the church. Everyone who bears responsibility in any way within the community of believers immediately becomes the object of attacks from the great adversary. Paul warns against that. The question is therefore to whom one would give responsibility, and in this case one should be very cautious. If widows then come upon the church, who are then expected to serve the church, one should be very careful to prevent problems.

The explanation of “having been the wife of one man” is the same as in 1 Timothy 3:2 on page 28. It means that there was always only one at a time. The thought is namely that she has proved her faithfulness. Not only marital faithfulness, but faithfulness in general. One must be faithful to be able to bear responsibility. If one serves the Lord, faithfulness is the first thing required, regardless of what the service consists in.

1 Timothy 5:10

Well reported of good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

Once someone is sixty years old, it is well known what one can expect from such a person. Such a one is expected to have already proved “good works”. Those are “works of faith”, “works to the glory of God” and in the service of God, from which those works would then consist.

The translators put a colon after “good works” to indicate approximately what those good works would be, drawn therefore from 1 Timothy 3:2 in connection with the

overseers. The question is: what could those widows possibly do in the service of the church? The answer is then: for example, bringing up children, lodging strangers, washing the saints' feet—literally and figuratively—relieving the afflicted sufficiently, and so forth. If she no longer has a household of her own, she can very well care for others—that is the idea. That is the work she can and should do within the church. The community of believers can make very good use of that kind of help. It concerns mutual care and a rather official appointment. For that someone is selected.

1 Timothy 5:11

But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry;

This sounds a bit strange and heavy, and yet it is a very simple thought. Namely, that once one takes on responsibility, specific responsibility in service, then it is in principle for the rest of one's life. One is expected to be faithful, and that is the problem of "the younger widows". The chance is great that they will yet prefer to serve a man. They do not need to fulfil this special service either, but if they come upon the brothers and sisters, then that logically has some consequences, which they will in turn have to let go if they marry after all. Once one has taken on a certain responsibility towards the Lord, and thereby towards the church, one cannot simply lay it down again. That is what is said here, and therefore: "refuse the younger widows", in the sense that they are officially supported by the church and do something in return. "Against Christ" means "instead of Christ". Instead of service to the Lord, and within the community, comes marriage to a man. There is nothing wrong with that; it only concerns that the church runs that risk in the case of "younger widows".

1 Timothy 5:12

Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.

The word "faith" replace with "faithfulness", for in the original text it is the same. Then the sentence is clear. Then the women in question must say: sorry but unfortunately I can no longer serve the church. I can no longer fulfil my obligation to the church. By doing so they cast off their "first faithfulness" to the Lord.

Verse 13 continues on "when they have begun to wax wanton".

1 Timothy 5:13

And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.

Those women, the widows who do that, are looking for something, for "they learn to be idle". They devise "vain things", "empty things". If we come across such a passage about widowers I will discuss that at length too. But we do not find that, so fortunately I do not have to do that.

They are "tattlers", that is, they talk about things that are none of their business, that they have only heard and pass on, without it touching them, for that is what "tattling" means. The conclusion I draw from these verses is that this comes because they have no husband. If you say: but I know some who do have a husband, then I say: then they do not really serve that husband. I regard it as an expression of the fact that something is not right in the marriage after all, for otherwise they would have something more meaningful to do. The women this concerns are searching—an empty occupation—until

they find someone who can give content to their life. I regard it as a biblical idea that in general the man should give content to the life of the woman. To put it another way, but then it is also ambiguous, for that is simply how it is: if a woman “wanders about from house to house” means that her life, without a husband, is empty in practice. The Apostle says: if they cannot do without a husband, then they behave in this way, and what they then need is a husband with whom they can give their life meaningful content.

1 Timothy 5:14

I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

The translators insert the word “widows” after “younger”. Whether that is so I venture to doubt. I would insert the word “women”, for I think it does not specifically concern widows, but young women. For it stands that the young women “bear children”, and that does not apply to the age of 59. The thought is that it is the most natural fulfilment of existence and therein man most easily finds his satisfaction and thus his peace. I do not believe that all this is precepts, but this is the general description of how it should be, namely “marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully”. If one is busy with the things that are most natural to do, one “gives none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully”. That means that all these things have directly to do with that adversary. One should give no place to the devil.

1 Timothy 5:15

For some are already turned aside after Satan.

The devil is always out to pull us down individually, and otherwise our community at least, to slander or whatever it may be. We should be on guard against that. It is not so that one can really prevent it, but one should not immediately give occasion, and therefore the most natural way of life is always the best. And then summarily verse 16.

1 Timothy 5:16

If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

With this we are back in verse 3: “Honour widows that are widows indeed”. If a believer is needy, he should first turn to his Christian family, for they have the responsibility, and then possibly the church. But Paul also teaches that not everyone who on first sight is without income should come upon the church.

1 Timothy 5:17

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

One should not take that “rule” too heavily, because there is only One who rules over the church and that is the Lord Himself. But it does of course concern leading, mainly through giving an example from chapter 4:12 and 1 Peter 5:3. The word “honour” in English is “honour” and is related to “honorarium”. It does not only concern holding someone in esteem, but practical matters. Thus also honorarium, “let the elders that

rule well be counted worthy of double honour". The word "especially" seems to me only to emphasise "the elders" and those are the ones "who labour in the word and doctrine".

1 Timothy 5:18

For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn.
And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.

It is drawn from the Old Testament, from Deuteronomy 25:4: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn". In 1 Corinthians 9:9 this expression is also used. There Paul adds: "Doth God take care for oxen?" His answer is evidently no, God does not care for oxen, at least not specifically, but the expression has a figurative meaning. Someone who does a certain work should live from that work, as is the case with the threshing ox. He walks between, and even over, the corn that is threshed and he should have the opportunity along the way to eat of that corn too. That is a normal natural course of things. Man should live from the labour he does. The imagery is then: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn". It is also written, in plain language: "The labourer is worthy of his reward" (Matthew 10:10).

1 Timothy 5:19

Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.
The reason for that seems clear to me. In the first place that is a general rule from the Law.

Deuteronomy 19:15

One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.

In particular it applies that the elders have to do with "the adversary" from verse 14 and thus with "Satan" from verse 15. A common method of the devil is to bring accusations, to initiate slander against the elders. I have seen enough around me to know how that works. How accusations are brought, how slander is kept up. It is always to put the elder in a bad light and therefore one should not lightly accept such an accusation.

1 Timothy 5:20

Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.
This still concerns the elders from verses 17 through 19, and not believers in general. That means this instruction is precisely not to be applied to others than elders. Mutual problems among believers are preferably resolved from person to person, and not in the presence of the whole group. Then there is a very simple truth stated here, which I personally therefore also practise on occasion. Not that I enjoy it, but in public I then speak about what I consider to be misconceptions of others. Sometimes I even mention names. Sometimes with great emphasis: so-and-so teaches... I do this as a warning and not as slander, and that is exactly what stands here. It is often held against me, and then I hear: you must not do that. If you have something against it, then you should speak to the person privately. We all do not need to be involved in that. Then I have to say: yes, we do need to be, for it does not concern sins in general. It concerns failures, for that is still the meaning of the term sins. When it concerns failures of elders, we are dealing with unbiblical teachings. Those should possibly be rebuked in public, "that others also may

fear”. That is, “take account of”. Then you are warned. It is a matter of playing with open cards. At the end of chapter 1 Paul does this too, and he also mentions two names: “Hymenaeus and Alexander”.

1 Timothy 5:21

I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.

Everything should be handled, discussed, and arranged as objectively as possible. Not on the basis of prejudice, because one has sympathies and antipathies beforehand, but objectively. “Doing nothing by partiality” concerns “not taking sides in advance”. But Paul also says:

1 Timothy 5:22

Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure.

That means one may indeed form an opinion about others. But it must be one based on reality. Laying hands on someone, and thus giving or transferring certain responsibilities to someone, should not happen because one finds the person likeable. Not from “partiality” or anything of the sort, and of course not from political considerations. But simply objectively with the thought: that is someone who may perhaps be able to bear that.

One should in the first place be faithful to the Word. On that ground one should bear responsibility. That applies not only to the Word and doctrine, but also on all other levels. Thus “lay hands suddenly on no man”, for it stands: “neither be partaker of other men’s sins”. And then: “keep thyself pure”. Then you have nothing to do with it. That is a recommendation, and so is this one:

1 Timothy 5:23

Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.

I do not know why the translators rendered it this way, including the insertion of “only”. Probably because they had something against wine. If for every sip of water you used to take you now suddenly have to take a sip of wine, then you drink an awful lot of wine—that is probably the idea. And yet it stands: “drink no longer water, but use a little wine”. It also states why: “for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities”. It probably concerns “the weakness of the stomach”. The idea is that water in those days was often contaminated, and if one has a weak stomach, that causes great problems. Wine, on the other hand, has a cleansing effect. That comes from the alcohol in it, and that is therefore very useful. It is not for nothing a picture of the Holy Spirit and of eternal life. In any case Timothy is told that he should take care of his own health. In the first place in the spiritual sense, at the end of chapter 4, and now at the end of chapter 5 in the physical sense.

1 Timothy 5:24-25

Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men

they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.

I regard these verses as an explanation of the preceding verses. Their failures are known, namely. They “go before to judgment” means: “give them no responsibility, for you have seen over time that they cannot bear it. Unfortunately, with some it only appears afterwards; then those sins “follow after”, as it stands at the end of verse 24. That is the phenomenon that people who in general prove very reliable suddenly, when they bear responsibility in the work of the Lord, are no longer reliable. That is not the normal rule, but it does happen, for they become prey to the devil, who then begins to occupy himself with them. That is no excuse, for they should be able to withstand it. That is possible. That is a matter of putting on “the whole armour of God” (Ephesians 6). Verse 25 emphasises the other way round: “likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand”. If that is not the case, then they cannot be hidden anyway, it stands. Then those good works, which one perhaps does not see, become manifest as soon as they receive responsibility, as soon as something comes their way, they are indeed demonstrated.

1 Timothy 6:1

Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.

Also in the last chapter of this first epistle to Timothy the Apostle is still rightly concerned with the situation as it existed in the church, whereby he does not primarily address believers in general, but those who bear responsibility in the church. They are expected here and there to take certain measures.

Paul begins with the fact that “servants as are under the yoke” should “count their own masters worthy of all honour”. “Servants” is still, even in modern English, far too weak a translation. In the Dutch of 350 years ago I do not know precisely, but “servants” means “slaves”, “serfs” in old Dutch. Those are those who are “bondmen”, and that is always the meaning of the term servant in the KJV. It therefore stands: “servants as are under the yoke”. Are there then also servants who are not under the yoke? No, the Apostle emphasises the expression here, so that there can be no misunderstanding.

He says that slaves should “count their masters worthy of all honour”. That means they are more or less obliged to do so. They should fulfil their earthly social obligations, all the more precisely because they are children of God. That is also stated afterwards, for it stands “that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed”. That doctrine falls under Timothy’s responsibility, and therefore it is also mentioned. In any case, we as believers are expected to be subject to “our masters”, for example the government, and not on religious grounds to turn against social situations. That is simply the biblical thought, for it can only lead to misunderstanding. Bear in mind that “we are dead to the world” and are expected to have as little to do with it as possible. We should be faithful to our Lord, not concern ourselves further with those earthly circumstances, and know our obligations.

One of the most tragic things, I think, is that believers who do know the truth forget it as soon as it concerns their social life and their position in society. Then they are suddenly alive again for the world. But that should not be. We should live from those biblical principles in the confidence that the Lord gives us what we need.

1 Timothy 6:2

And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.

It may be that a believing servant (slave) has a believing master (boss). Of those it is said that those servants should not despise their masters, because that master is in fact their equal as a child of God. Because they are only brethren, for in the church “there is neither bond nor free” Galatians 3:28. That is the church relationship. Where it concerns social relationships, this same relationship of master and slave simply continues. Unless that master sets his slave free. That belongs to the possibilities, but remarkably we find nowhere in the New Testament a call to those believing masters to set their slaves free. Outside the Bible we know fairly certainly from early church history that believing masters often set their slaves free. That is rather often mentioned. It is further said that those believing servants should serve their believing master all the more, “because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit”. For that servant, that slave, should even love his master, and thus serve him, because he is a brother and because they together are “partakers of the benefit”. And then: “These things teach and exhort”. Timothy should do that.

1 Timothy 6:3 -4

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;

He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,

Those are rather strong words. They are in any case much stronger than the thought I sometimes hear: how nice that one believes this and the other believes that. What a lovely mixed company we believers are. The difference in what we believe does not make a beautiful colourful whole; that is not the expression of “the manifold wisdom of God” (Ephesians 3:10, on the contrary. It is the expression of confusion and in fact also of unbelief. It is not so difficult to ascertain that all those so-called differences of insight simply yet really arise from one’s own philosophy, from one’s own reasoning, from the so-called “carnal mind”. Thereby one preferably uses a Bible text to support one’s own philosophy. And so we arrive at the expression: “every heretic has his text”. Whatever teaching one holds to, there is always at least one Bible text for it, and that is where the difference of insight comes from. For one has something else in mind, wants something else, because certain biblical thoughts are rather unwelcome. One would prefer to see it differently, and then looks whether one can also substantiate that with Bible texts. Everyone knows that infant baptism does not occur in the Bible. But then one goes searching and says: yet it stands “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31. The conclusion is then: then those children are also baptised? If you want to read that into it... but it really is not there.

It does not concern our philosophy or our theories, but what Scripture systematically sets forth. Whoever departs from that, “consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ”, “he is proud, knowing nothing”. We read in the first epistle to the Corinthians that pure knowledge—not practical, but theoretical knowledge—puffs up. 1 Corinthians 8:1. People who know a lot present themselves as

greater than they are. It may seem great, but in practice it is hollow—that is what “proud” means. It is great, but it is empty. The specific gravity is particularly low. It naturally concerns the content. Knowledge is only knowledge in the biblical sense of the word. It is practical knowledge and that never concerns theory, but the practical outworking of it. When one departs from the Word of God, one is left with only theory and philosophy. One can talk very interestingly and especially at length about that and perhaps argue, but one knows nothing then.

1 Timothy 6:3-4

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,

Such a person “dotes”. The word “doting” is actually the designation of a disease. It rages in a human body. It is a medical term used here. It connects with “the wholesome words” in verse 3. The wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ are indeed good for health. That will surely apply to spiritual health, but that is of the greatest importance for physical health. Departing from those wholesome words, by holding to another doctrine, brings disease with it—spiritual disease. Then it becomes raving (madness), for one can philosophise endlessly. It must surely be possible to keep thinking up new questions, and then one can go on for a while longer.

Such a person is occupied with completely theoretical and therefore completely unimportant matters. “He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting”. He is very ill, actively ill. He “dotes about questions and strifes of words”. It is always about debate, about measuring strength. Whether someone can get the better of another, whether someone can get his position accepted among people. Whether he can find followers for his ideas. That leads to “envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings”. “Envy” is “jealousy”, “envy”. That “questions and strifes of words” is always a matter of measuring strength, quarrelling over something, making trouble. Seeing whether one can push one’s idea through. Where it concerns the truth, it does not work that way.

“Railings” will undoubtedly follow. That is “playing the man” instead of the ball. If one cannot win the discussion, one begins to slander the opponent. One begins to speak evil of him. Some people are very good at that. Especially in politics it occurs frequently. Millions are squandered just to slander someone. I find it a completely dishonourable performance. In Christian circles at least as much slander occurs. For slandering was invented by the devil himself. If anyone was ever slandered, it was the Lord Jesus, and so it has always continued, also among Christians. That “railing” is a form of “evil surmisings”. Then one begins to think evil and seek it; those are synonyms in Scripture. Thinking evil or devising evil is seeking evil, and that arises when one departs from “the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

If one departs from the Word of God, one has all human thinking and all human imagination at one’s disposal, to construct whatever one likes from it. There is never an end to it, and it always remains chaos, because it never serves any purpose. Or one develops a certain idea or doctrine that seems for a while to serve a certain purpose. But yes, circumstances change, then it must be adjusted again, then it must be changed again, something new comes in its place. And so one remains always busy thinking something up. It is unnecessary; we have the Word of God, which “is a more

sure word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:19, which is unchangeable. That is “the wholesome word of God”, and one should live from that. Circumstances may change, but the Bible never does. The world may perhaps change, man may change, perhaps, but God never changes and therefore the truth does not either.

Whoever seeks firm truth inevitably arrives at the Word of God. Then one need no longer depart from it. In this context the biblical expression also fits: “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3. Popularly put: blessed are the simple, for they are too simple to be able to think up their own theories. There is nothing left for them but to hold to the Word of God. They are not intelligent enough to contradict it. So in that respect it is better to be simple. So: I cannot say anything against that. Fine, that was not the intention either. If you are intelligent, then you must be able to find something. You can even have a day’s work with that, even make a profession of it. But here it simply stands what one would know: if it has no bearing on the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, then one knows nothing.

The Word of God, Scripture, is “profitable for doctrine” (2 Timothy 3:16. The goal is not theoretical knowledge or anything like that, but it concerns the practical outworking in the life of the man of God. And that is what it is about in 1 Timothy 6:3 too: “the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ”. That is the doctrine “according to godliness”.

1 Timothy 6:5

Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

(Note: “from such withdraw thyself” stands in the Textus Receptus, but according to the better manuscripts it does not belong there. Even if it is not there, that is still very much the thought, of course.) A “perverse disputing” is a kind of “perverse wrangling”. Then the thing is crooked. Then things are made crooked—that is what the word actually says. “Wrangling”, something like that is called. The word “perverse” also means “crooked”. Something that should have been straight, but a “twist” has been put in it. It was straight, but now it is per-verse, crooked therefore.

“Men of corrupt minds” does not mean they are stupid, but that they use their minds in the wrong way, direct them to the wrong things. Thereby they are “destitute of the truth”. The “truth”, in relation to thinking and to the mind, is what the life-principle—the Spirit—is for man as such. Whoever is destitute of that has that life-principle gone out of him. Thinking, using the mind has no sense at all if the truth is not the core of that thinking and those deliberations. If we are “destitute of the truth”, then we have nothing from our mind. It is then called a “corrupt mind”.

By whom are they “destitute of the truth”? That is not stated, but in any case it does not say that they have cast away the truth. That is undoubtedly so, but it does not stand there. It does not even say that they have departed, though that is so too. It stands: “they are destitute of the truth”. These people have fallen “into the snare of the devil”, is the expression in chapter 3:7. The devil robs the truth. He “holds the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18. He has astonishingly much personnel that helps him with that, for that is what people do. If I become really cynical, I say that all that so-called science of man in fact serves no other purpose than to hide the truth.

“They supposing that gain is godliness”. They suppose that godliness yields profit. That one can use that Christian life and everything connected with it to become better off

oneself. One makes a business of it and gets income from it. One makes a trade of it, a business. Peter wrote about that.

2 Peter 2:3

And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

Paul came in from the other side and wrote in:

1 Corinthians 2:17

For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

We do not make a business of it, said Paul, but in practice it does happen. To Timothy it is said: “from such withdraw thyself”. This stands in the Textus Receptus, but according to the better manuscripts it does not belong there. Even if it is not there, that is still very much the thought, of course. 1 Timothy 6:6

But godliness with contentment is great gain.

That is true. One can make one’s gain with that godliness, but only if there is “contentment”. “Contentment” is the real word for what we nowadays rather wrongly call “contentment”, namely that one has peace. But “contentment” means that one has “enough”. We unfortunately no longer use that word. If one is content, one needs no more. If one thinks one needs more, however, one comes to departure from “the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ”. One should be content with what one has received from God’s side. Content with “all spiritual blessings wherewith we are blessed in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3. If one has enough of that, it will appear that that godliness is great gain. When we learn here to live in dependence on our Lord, it will appear that we are “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:17. We shall receive our reward for that in heaven. That is “great gain”, because it concerns lasting gain.

1 Timothy 6:7

For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. “A shroud has no pockets” is the English saying. When we were born, we brought nothing with us, and when we die we also carry nothing out of this world. All that one has here in the world one loses anyway. The only thing we can take with us is what we have received from God’s side, because it is of another origin. Of heavenly origin, namely. Then it will appear that that is lasting, and then it becomes “great gain” after all. Not by earthly standards, for then one has nothing from one’s faith. That is not my philosophy, but it simply stands in the Bible. Otherwise I should not dare to say it. In general it goes much better for the unrighteous than for the righteous (Ecclesiastes 7:15. Whether you are believing or unbelieving, we all die and take nothing with us then. But the result of life, the work and the Word of God in our hearts and in our lives, is salvation that is indeed great gain. That will appear in the future.

1 Timothy 6:8

And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. We shall have enough of that. “Food and raiment” are the most necessary necessities of life. Food and clothing, though I also understand “raiment” as “a place to live”. A covering of the house, where one is protected. With that we shall be content, but that does not mean the Lord may not give us more. But one only needs the most necessary,

and one should have enough of that. Then the Apostle goes on to those who want to be rich. 1 Timothy 6:9

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

The subject is introduced through verse 5: “supposing that gain is godliness”. That one can therefore become materially better off from it. And then “but they that will be rich fall into temptation”. “Temptation” is always “testing of faith”. It has to do with spiritual things. It therefore begins with departing from the doctrine, because one is not “content”, but pursues material possession instead of knowledge of the truth.

Thereby the rich come in a bad light. But it does not concern the rich, but those who want to become rich. There are after all rich people who did not necessarily want to become rich. It therefore concerns the pursuit of riches. They “fall into temptation and a snare”. That is “the snare of the devil” from chapter 3:7. There it concerned an overseer, and here it concerns someone who departs from the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is therefore exactly the same. The devil makes use among other things of man’s pursuit of possession. It is understandable that this is in man, but actually it is a perversity. In the sense that the pursuit is wrongly applied; it is wrongly directed. Man should not pursue material possession, but spiritual possession. If that man does not want that, however, or does not see the value of it, then he automatically directs himself to the other. Then he pursues material possession. People often think that who or what someone is depends on his or her material possessions. If you are rich, then you are something. No, then you have something, but you are nothing. If you are something, then that is not because of what you possess materially, but because of your “spiritual baggage”. In general that then concerns knowledge of the truth. That is in you, namely, and thus your possession. That forms your ego.

When one pursues becoming rich, one indeed sinks “in destruction and perdition”.

Because it generally goes at the expense of spiritual values and thereby of truth.

1 Timothy 6:10

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Not money itself, but “the love of money” is the root of all evil. “Having money is good for the nerves”, Maup Caransa said. Personally I think money is the root of all evil, but also of all good. For in general man must have money for everything he does. “Which while some coveted after”, after “the love of money”, namely, “they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”. Erred from faithfulness to God therefore. If one is covetous of money, one lets go of the faith that God provides in everything. If we are poor, we cannot at any rate trust in our possessions or in our bank account. Then there really remains nothing but to trust in the Lord. That is the advantage of poverty. If one has money, it is evidently no longer so necessary to trust in the Lord. I think it is easier to trust in the Lord if one possesses little and lives by faith. If we are poor and we are in trouble, we bring it to the Lord. If we are rich and we are in trouble, we pay to be delivered from it. What makes a man unhappy is precisely his covetousness, his pursuit of possession. The idea that he comes short, while he has “food and raiment”, is a typical Western affliction.

If a pursuit of more determines our life, then it goes at the expense of faith. So it is also presented here. One thereby sinks “in destruction and perdition” and one pierces

oneself “through with many sorrows”. Covetousness brings suffering with it. One therefore practises in practice the opposite of what one strives for.

1 Timothy 6:11

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

Run away from it. Have nothing to do with it. “Follow after righteousness” and not after material possession. Pursue these virtues, for that is what these things are called in good English. In the Bible they are designated as “the fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22). Pursue “righteousness and godliness”. Those are practical things. “Faith” is “faithfulness”. “Love” has to do with “humility”, with “submission”. “Patience and meekness” are concepts the world needs. In general it is known that the misery in the world is caused by there being no righteousness. No faithfulness, no love, no patience, no meekness. These things are in general also not found in the natural man. They are fruit of the Word of God in man. Fruits therefore of faith. Or as it is called in Ephesians 5:9: “the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth”.

What is love? What is truth? What is right? Righteousness? We cannot define it well; at most give some examples of the outworkings. But what it is in itself we cannot define. That is so because it concerns divine attributes that are not found in creation, but in the Creator. Creation has knowledge of them, and man’s search is in fact the search for these things. The search for something he cannot define, but of which he has a suspicion, of which he knows through his conscience that it exists. What we as believers should pursue cannot be worked for, cannot be bought, cannot even really be exercised. One can only receive them.

1 Timothy 6:12

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

There is only one good fight according to the Bible, that “of faith”. One should not have the idea that it directly concerns the fight every human being encounters in life as such. This passage is not about that fight. It concerns holding fast to what God has said and promised. That proves to be a fight, because on the one hand it is in conflict with our own human nature and on the other with the prevailing things in the world around us. We serve the One who was rejected by the world and stood outside the camp. We should go forth unto Him “without the camp” (Hebrews 13:13, and thereby we come into a situation of conflict. Therefore Timothy, and we too, should hold fast to faith as set out from the beginning of this epistle and indeed right through to the last verses of this epistle.

It is a fight because a believer sets himself up as an adversary of the devil. From that moment we are regarded by Satan as opponents. For we withdraw ourselves from his dominion, and thereafter he does everything to bring us back under it.

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

One comes into that fight, but we need not be afraid of it, because we have a very good “personal standard equipment”, though we must then indeed make use of that “shield of faith” to “quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Ephesians 6:16. The example of

the Lord Jesus in this fight was that when there was an attack from an adversary, it was parried with the simple words: "It is written" (among others Matthew 4). "Lay hold on eternal life" is an expression that is misused, because when it is taken out of the context in which it stands it easily acquires another meaning. Timothy had already received eternal life. Nevertheless it is said to him personally: "lay hold on eternal life". For here it concerns whether he also truly lives that received eternal life. In short, that Christ lives in him. So that the Word of God bears fruit in him. Whether you have eternal life is one thing. Whether you live eternal life is quite another thing. All those epistles are directed to that.

Just as Christ was called to be appointed Son, so we too are called to be appointed sons (Romans 8). We are called to glory, to an inheritance, and that runs through His service. Timothy's service had proved sufficient in the preceding time: "and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses". We know that, says Paul. These words were encouragement to Timothy to continue especially on that way.

1 Timothy 6:13-14

I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ;

In Acts 14:26 it stands: "...where they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work...". It means they had been placed under the command of grace; "grace reigns". Here with "I give thee charge in the sight of God" exactly the same applies. Timothy is placed under the command, under the orders, of God. He will therefore rule. He issues the commands. Timothy should therefore be fully obedient to God and stand completely in His service.

The expression "who quickeneth all things" connects with "lay hold on eternal life". Insofar as we receive life, it is from God. Insofar as we also live that life, and thus receive it daily, it is just as much from God. He makes alive, now.

Romans 8:11

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Not in the sense that He will do it in the future, but that He does it in the present. That concerns the body of the old man in which the believer dwells since he came to faith. He gives us life according as we are willing to serve Him through that life.

"I give thee charge... before Christ Jesus", who according to verse 15 is the expression of God's being. "Who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession". The term is not used to indicate that the Lord Jesus lived in the time of Pontius Pilate.

John 18:37

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

The Lord Jesus stands here before and under Pontius Pilate, the man who would judge the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus stood under the power of Pontius Pilate, and on that occasion Christ Jesus "witnessed a good confession". Therefore He answers Pilate with:

“To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth”. Not: that I should become King. That is all too often read into it, as though the Lord came to establish His kingdom here, but that is really a misunderstanding. The ministry of the Lord Jesus consisted in nothing other than referring to the truth, namely to the Scriptures. So that men should turn to the LORD—where I deliberately use the Old Testament term. So that they should indeed believe in the Word and the promises of God that stand in the Scriptures. Concluded with: “Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice”.

Timothy should do exactly the same, namely “bear witness unto the truth”. Thereby we are back at the great fundamental truth concerning the church, which Timothy was after all to serve. What is our first responsibility? “To bear witness unto the truth”. Or with Peter’s words: “to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). It always concerns bearing witness to the Scriptures. That is what the Lord Jesus did, and Timothy, and thus we too, should be His followers.

“That thou keep this commandment”, in the subjunctive mood, is Paul’s wish. That Timothy should “hold” this commandment, for that is what the word primarily means.

“That thou hold this teaching”, for it does not stand: that thou hold this in commandments. That stands nowhere in the New Testament. “Without spot, unrebukable” is the fixed expression of the Apostle to designate the church, for example in Philippians 2:15. It does not mean one does not sin, but that one lives in accordance with these New Testament principles. That one lives under the reign of grace and thus serves the One who sits on the throne of grace.

“Until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ”. There are always those who interpret this as though the thought then was that the Lord would still come, or that the rapture of the church would take place during Timothy’s lifetime. For, they say, how can he keep this commandment “until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” if Timothy dies before the Lord Jesus Christ appears? And so this epistle is immediately declared an early epistle of the apostle Paul. For in the later epistles it seems one no longer waits for the return of Christ in that generation. Here evidently still so, it would appear from verse 14. But that is of course not so. It is certainly no indication of time here. What it really concerns is that holding this commandment, fighting this good fight, laying hold on this eternal life, will have definitive result at, or in, the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. In that “Day”, namely. The Apostle speaks of our “appearing before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10). We should serve the Lord with our hope and expectation directed to the recompense. Looked at another way: The work God does in believers He continues to do and is directed to the completion, and thereby the official appointment, of the church in the future. That happens through “the rapture of the church”; our “appearing before the judgment seat of Christ”.

1 Timothy 6:15-16

Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

Christ will “in his times shew the blessed and only Potentate”, whom no man hath seen nor can see, namely the invisible God. The thought behind it is very simple: we believers should not set our expectation on visible things, nor measure the result of our service by

visible things. In reality it concerns invisible things and an invisible God whom we serve. Who nevertheless has spoken and has manifested Himself to us, or made Himself known, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. “In his times” means “in his own time”. He determines when this “only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” manifests Himself. It seems as though the apostle Paul with these expressions does not even so much think of the Lord Jesus Christ, but of God as such. “The Lord Jesus Christ” from verse 14 is however the manifestation of God. For He is “the express image of his person” (Hebrews 1:3. Insofar as God can be seen, one sees the Son.

John 1:18

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

From verse 15 one could still think it concerns the appearing in the glory of Christ. For Christ is the only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords. But as it continues in verse 16, one must let that go again. It therefore concerns the Father here, who is then manifested in, or through, the Son.

“Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto” means that God dwells in light. We cannot go there; a man cannot perceive that and one cannot break into it. God is the One who reveals Himself. Insofar as God is light, Christ is the effulgence of it. That invisible God, who comes to expression in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, will indeed “shew”. He will therefore bring God “to light”. To Him therefore belongs “honour” on account of His eternal power. Insofar as we have received eternal life, and thus eternal power, it belongs to Him. We should serve Him with that life—that was the intention.

1 Timothy 6:17-19

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

We are back again at “them that are rich”. They have a tendency to pride. They can after all do more than those who have fallen rather poorer. But they should not be highminded and thus haughty. Moreover they should not set their hope on “the uncertainty of riches”, but on the living God. For riches tend not to stand still. That is “uncertainty”; it falls away. You lose riches just like that. The “living God”, on the other hand, simply stands. One can permanently rely on Him and one should therefore trust in Him, for He “giveth us richly all things to enjoy”. God has nothing against riches—that stands here at any rate. He gives us richly and indeed to enjoy them. Not just sparingly. That is also what we learn from the Preacher. It is the intention that one should enjoy life, preferably “richly”.

Just as God gives us all things richly to enjoy, so the rich should do the same, for they are in a position to do so. And therefore it stands: “that they do good”, for God is after all beneficent. “Do good” means: do good (well) deeds, good works. They should “be rich in good works”. They possess much and therefore they should do many good works. That means “ready to distribute”, for that is what a rich man can at any rate do. If he is really rich, he can give out and that without it really costing him anything, I think. The word “willing to communicate” may be left out, for “ready to distribute” means one should

have things in common (communicate). “Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation” in verse 19 means: if they do this, they lay up for themselves a treasure, in the sense of “saving” or “laying aside”. “A good foundation against the time to come” is clear; that is the basis. “Against the time to come” is rather more difficult. Partly because it stands “the time to come”. That should not have stood, but rather “the coming”. Then the question would have been: which coming? That is “the coming age”. It is a logical sequel to “charge them that are rich in this present world” at the beginning of verse 17, for where “world” stands, “age” would be better as translation of the Greek “aion”. For it does not concern the cosmos, which is also translated world, but the prevailing circumstances in that world at that moment.

Those rich should lay up for themselves a good foundation for the coming age. The thought is that one, living in “this present age”, can invest in “the coming age”. All “the good fight of faith” from verse 12 is directed to that. Our service to the Lord now, in this present age, is intended as investment in the coming age. It concerns “the recompence of the reward” namely (Hebrews 10:35). The rich should therefore invest some of their material riches in the coming age. That means one can after all take something of one’s riches here with one. It is essentially a very simple matter. One invests here in “the work of the Lord”, after which one will receive it back from the Lord. Then it is “converted”, and that I call “laundering black money into white” once more. Timothy also has a “deposit”. He also invests in that “coming age”.

1 Timothy 6:20-21

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.

Timothy has something placed at his disposal; something has been entrusted to him. Here it stands “deposit”. If it had stood “pound”, the meaning would not have changed. Then I come to the parable of the pounds (Luke 19). Here it concerns the ministry he has. In chapter 4:14 it is called “the gift”. “Keep that which is committed to thy trust” is that “good fight” (1:18), the “good fight of faith” (6:12).

“Avoiding” means “turning away from” the “profane”, because God has no part in it, “vain babblings”. Those sound like powerful words, so it seems, but they are empty of content. In my mind I hear again all those politicians talking over one another.

Theological books can also be constructed like that. Astonishingly interesting, astonishingly powerful, but when you have finished it you still do not know what it was about or what to do with it.

Avoid “oppositions of science falsely so called”. Those are the objections. Science sets one thing against another, then they are oppositions, against what the Bible, or what God sets. God has set His Son, and what science sets against that are therefore oppositions. But because it rests on nothing, at any rate not on truth, it is called “oppositions of science falsely so called”. It does indeed concern what man calls science, but from a biblical standpoint it is no science. The only real science is knowing the truth, the Word of God. Knowing the Lord Jesus, in “whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” Colossians 2:3.

Two thousand years ago it was already the case that “some professing” (they use science as a pretext) “have erred concerning the faith”. This concerns believers who do not live by faith but attach more value to what man invents or discovers. They trust in

that and not in the Word of God. We should not enter into debate with it, not reply, but turn away from it. For that is what stands in the Bible.

The ministries of Paul and Timothy were always on the one hand directed to adding to the church and then to the work within the church. A work directed only so that one should abide by the Word of God. Whereupon the apostle concludes with: "Grace be with thee". That is precisely what it concerns. Not the law, nor philosophy, nor what man passes off as science. Only "grace be with thee".

God gives from His grace everything we need to enjoy, to be glad. That meaning is after all enclosed in the word grace. He gives it freely; we need not pay for it in any way. The only thing we should do to partake of it is listen to (believe in) that Word of God. That is a fight, but we are able, from God's side, to stand in that fight.

2 Timothy

A Schematic Overview for 2 Timothy,

Personal Charge to Endure, Guard the Deposit, and Preach Amid Apostasy (as a "last testament" tone)

- Greeting & Thanksgiving (1:1–5): Paul as apostle by God's will according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus. To Timothy his dearly beloved son. Grace, mercy, peace. Thanksgiving for unfeigned faith dwelling first in grandmother Lois and mother Eunice; remembrance of Timothy's tears.
- Stir Up the Gift & Power of God (1:6–7): Stir up the gift given by laying on of Paul's hands. God gave not a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and sound mind.
- Not Ashamed of the Testimony (1:8–14): Be partaker of afflictions of the gospel according to God's power. God saved and called us with a holy calling according to His purpose and grace (given in Christ before the world began), now manifested by Christ's appearing (who abolished death and brought life/immortality to light through the gospel). Paul appointed preacher/apostle/teacher of Gentiles. Hold fast the form of sound words in faith/love in Christ; keep the good deposit by the Holy Ghost.
- Examples of Faithfulness & Forsaking (1:15–18): Many in Asia turned away (Phygelus, Hermogenes). The Lord give mercy to Onesiphorus's house (often refreshed Paul, not ashamed of his chain; sought him diligently in Rome).
- Be Strong in Grace & Pass On the Deposit (2:1–2): Be strong in the grace in Christ Jesus. Commit what you heard from Paul among many witnesses to faithful men able to teach others also.
- Endure as a Soldier, Athlete, Husbandman (2:3–7): Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (no entanglement with this life's affairs to please the One who chose him). Strive lawfully for the crown. The husbandman partakes first of the fruits. Consider and the Lord gives understanding.
- Remember Christ & Endure for the Elect (2:8–13): Remember Jesus Christ of David's seed raised from the dead according to Paul's gospel. Paul suffers as an evildoer but the word of God is not bound. Endure for the elect's sake that they obtain salvation with eternal glory. Faithful saying: if we died with Him we live with Him; if we suffer we reign with Him; if we deny Him He denies us; if we are faithless He remains faithful (cannot deny Himself).

- Approved Workman & Avoid Vain Babblings (2:14–19): Put them in remembrance; charge before the Lord not to strive about words (subverts hearers). Study to show thyself approved — a workman rightly dividing the word of truth. Shun profane/ vain babblings (increase to more ungodliness). Their word eats like a canker (Hymenaeus, Philetus — erred saying resurrection is past, overthrow faith of some). Foundation of God stands sure: The Lord knows those who are His; let everyone naming Christ's name depart from iniquity.
- Vessels in the Great House & Pursue Righteousness (2:20–26): In a great house (church) there are vessels of gold/silver (honour) and wood/earth (dishonour). Purge oneself from dishonourable vessels to be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, meet for the Master's use, prepared for every good work. Flee youthful lusts; follow righteousness, faith, love, peace with those calling on the Lord from a pure heart. Avoid foolish/unlearned questions (gender strifes). Servant of the Lord must not strive but be gentle, apt to teach, patient; instruct opposers in meekness — God may give repentance to acknowledge truth and recover from the devil's snare.
- Perilous Times & Continue in What You Learned (3:1–17): In last days perilous times: men lovers of self, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than God; having form of godliness but denying its power — from such turn away. They creep into houses, lead captive silly women laden with sins, ever learning but never to knowledge of truth. Evil men/seducers wax worse, deceiving and deceived. But continue in what you learned/assured of (from childhood knowing holy Scriptures able to make wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus). All Scripture God-breathed and profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness — that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.
- Charge to Preach & Paul's Example (4:1–8): Charge before God and Christ (Judge of quick and dead at His appearing/kingdom): Preach the word; be instant in/out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with longsuffering and doctrine. Time coming when they will not endure sound doctrine but heap teachers with itching ears, turn from truth to fables. But watch in all things, endure afflictions, do evangelist's work, make full proof of ministry. Paul ready to be offered; fought good fight, finished course, kept the faith. Crown of righteousness laid up for him (and all loving Christ's appearing) from the righteous Judge.
- Personal Requests, Warnings & Closing (4:9–22): Come before winter (Demas forsook, loved this present world; Crescens to Galatia; Titus to Dalmatia; only Luke with me). Bring Mark (profitable for ministry); cloak/books/parchments from Troas. Alexander the coppersmith did much evil (withstood words) — Lord reward according to works; beware. At first answer no one stood with me (all forsook) — may not be laid to their charge. Lord stood with/strengthened me so preaching fully known and Gentiles hear; delivered from lion's mouth. Lord deliver from every evil work and preserve to heavenly kingdom. Salute Prisca/Aquila, Onesiphorus's house. Erastus at Corinth; Trophimus left sick at Miletum. Do diligence before winter. Greetings from Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, all brethren. Lord Jesus Christ with thy spirit. Grace with you. Amen.

Unified Themes Across All Three Letters - 1 & 2nd Timothy and Titus

- Sound Doctrine vs. Departure: Combat "other doctrine," fables, genealogies, law-strivings, profane babblings, itching ears turning to fables. Goal: love from pure heart/good conscience/unfeigned faith.
- Grace & New Life: Salvation/calling by grace/purpose (not works); live by grace, not law. Promise of life in Christ; lay hold on eternal life (live the received life).
- Leadership & Example: Elders/overseers/deacons qualified by character/faithfulness (apt to teach, examples, not lovers of money). Pass the deposit to faithful men able to teach others. Paul models mercy, endurance, faithfulness.
- Practical Godly Living & Good Works: Instructions for groups (men/women, servants, widows, rich); adorn doctrine; maintain good works (profitable/edifying). Flee youthful lusts/worldly love; pursue righteousness/faith/love/peace.
- Endurance in Suffering: Fight good fight; endure hardness as soldier; share afflictions of gospel. Expect persecution for godly living in Christ. Lord delivers/preserves.
- The Church & Hope: House of God/pillar of truth; mystery of godliness. Look for Christ's appearing/kingdom; crown/reward for those loving His appearing. Preserve truth amid apostasy (last days/perilous times).
- Personal Faithfulness: Stir up gift; hold fast sound words/deposit by Holy Ghost. No entanglement with this life; be approved workman rightly dividing truth.

1 Timothy focuses on order/conduct;

2 Timothy on personal endurance/guardianship amid forsaking;

Titus on setting things in order with practical grace-living.

The letters form a cohesive charge to leaders for a healthy church grounded in grace and truth.

2 Timothy

2 Timothy 1:1-2

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul also appeals, just as in verse 1 of 1 Timothy, to the fact that he is "an apostle of Jesus Christ". And that "by the will of God". The Lord Jesus Christ is after all the express image of God (Hebrews 1:3. If it was the will of the Lord Jesus Christ, then it was the will of God. That lends Paul even more authority. And then it stands "according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus". That is also determining for the subject of the epistle. It concerns that promised life in Christ Jesus. That will also appear later. That life came about in the resurrection of Christ. Not earlier, and for that reason Abraham is indeed a believer, but not born again. That new birth is yet to come.

In verse 2 the addressee is addressed: "To Timothy". And here too an explanation: "my dearly beloved son". We know he was not Paul's literal son. The concept "son" concerns inheritance right, the transfer by the "father" of possessions and thereby of responsibilities. You can also possess those, and that is what it concerns here. Paul transferred part of his responsibility to Timothy. Who thereby logically was "his son". And then the usual greeting at the beginning of an epistle: "Grace, mercy, and peace... from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord". The terms grace, mercy, and peace are largely synonymous. The same also applies to "God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord". For without "God the Father" no "Christ Jesus our Lord" and vice versa. Around Christmas we have no problem at all that the expression "Father" is applied to the Lord Jesus. In Isaiah 9:6 it has been translated as "Everlasting Father", but under other circumstances one would have translated it as "eternal Father". That was however not considered so fitting to designate the Lord Jesus. So one translated it rather more distantly as "Everlasting Father".

If peace comes from God the Father, it comes to us through Christ Jesus our Lord. All that we receive through, or from, Christ Jesus our Lord we receive from God as such and thereby from God the Father. Distinction is then no longer made in the Bible, and therefore it is mentioned in one breath. Not because there are two, but because it is one. That usage is illustrated in the first half of the verse in: "grace, mercy". That is twice the same to strengthen the concept. What is the difference between grace and mercy? "Grace" is, according to Christian handbooks, "unmerited favour". What is "mercy"? "Unmerited favour". And yet the terms often stand in one breath. "Mercy" is a form of "compassion", perhaps "fellow-suffering" and "involvement".

"Grace and peace" are not really synonymous, but in biblical context usually are, because grace is one of the most important features of the New Covenant. The Old Covenant is after all called "Law" and the New "Covenant of Grace". Sometimes "Covenant of" is omitted. Then it stands "grace" and the New Covenant is meant, of which grace is the most important feature. That is normal usage. Two other important features of the New Covenant are "peace", so it is already called in the Old Testament and in Ephesians 4 "the bond of peace"; the other feature is "eternal". For it cannot be broken. An eternal covenant, in replacement of a perishable covenant. Grace in place of law. And thus peace in place of a covenant that only brings struggle and contention, for that is what the Law is. "Grace be unto you, and peace", a standard greeting in the epistles, is therefore the reference to the New Covenant under which one should live. Such a strange wish is that not, for believers have always been inclined, even to our own day, to place themselves under the law. Thereby they lose their peace, which is precisely handed to us from God's side.

Grace and peace come not from man, or not through human agency, but from God the Father. It does not stand God the Father of Christ Jesus, but "God the Father and Christ Jesus". The concept "Father" means in the first place that He is the origin of things. He gives. Then the question is to whom? The one who receives is usually designated in the Bible as "Son". Sometimes it simply concerns something being given. For example in James 1:17: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights". God is there called "Father". Son is not spoken of. It concerns that He gives.

"Peace... from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord". If the expression "our Lord" stands at the end, then evidently, after looking up all the Scripture places, it is in the

sense of “our Master”. The expression “Lord Jesus Christ” also occurs, just as “Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:24). Then “Lord” stands first, because it is the oldest title in biblical history that He bore. Then “Lord” is the translation of the Hebrew “Jehovah”. That is His Name. But that word “Lord” can also have the meaning of “Master”. Then one sometimes gets that expression “Master and Lord”.

John 13:13-14

Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

If you read the expression “Christ Jesus” and then “Lord” at the end, then it is not so much the designation of His Name Jehovah, but of His function in relation to us. He is our Master. He is Christ. He is Jesus. That is His Name and He is our Lord, whom we serve. That is naturally what this epistle is about. That Christ Jesus should be served, as Lord. And then the actual epistle begins.

2 Timothy 1:3

I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; In the first place we as believers have reason for thanksgiving for everything God the Father gives us through and in Christ Jesus, whom we serve. By biblical standards man is by definition a servant. Fortunately we can and may and should serve the Lord Jesus Christ, or God. That is reason for thanksgiving, for then one is at least occupied with something meaningful and moreover it yields reward “in that day” (verses 12 and 18). It must be clear which “day” it is, namely that of “the rapture of the church”. Or: the day of our “appearing before the judgment seat of Christ”. “The day of our sonship”. When it concerns Paul, it concerns that he did not serve the Lord and on the way was once seized by the scruff of the neck on the road to Damascus. But here he says: “I serve [God] from my forefathers with pure conscience”. That he does “in a pure conscience”. That is, that according to conscience he always thought he was serving the Lord. That was in practice not so, but he did not know that. That was ignorance and also unbelief, as we have seen in connection with 1 Timothy 1:13. Meanwhile the Apostle says in this verse thanks for his present position in the service of God and thereby also for Timothy's position. About whom Paul is therefore somewhat concerned, though not too seriously, I think. Timothy has “a warm place” in the heart of the apostle Paul and therefore he also says in verses 4 and 5.

2 Timothy 1:4-5

Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

The name “Eunice” is “unique” in its pronunciation. The “c” is a “k”, via Greek. There is that name “Nike” and that means “victory”. “Eunice” thus acquires the meaning of “blessed with victory”. “Lois” means “the better”.

How it was with those tears of Timothy we do not know. Perhaps Paul knew some circumstances of Timothy and events that had taken place. He appears reasonably well informed, as also appears at the end of this epistle and also in the last part of this

chapter. But perhaps he simply assumes it, because he knows what it means to be a servant of Christ in this ministry. That this brings tears with it he must have known from his own experience. He undoubtedly expects this also in Timothy's life. Paul therefore sympathises, but is also filled with joy: "being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy"; "when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee". The term "unfeigned faith" we have already encountered earlier, among others in 1 Timothy 1:5. It concerns being sincere.

Timothy was evidently brought up from home with the Word of God, with the Old Testament I think, by grandmother Lois and mother Eunice. He came from a God-fearing family. I regard it as one of my greatest blessings that I come from a family (several generations) that served the Lord. You come from somewhere, you belong somewhere. You automatically have a bond with it. That is never gone. If you are brought up from youth with the Word of God, then it is already in you very young. For Timothy it is not only to his advantage that he came from such a believing family; it also brings responsibility with it. That will be the reason why Paul saw something in him and took him along and "laid hands on him", but that is verse 6.

2 Timothy 1:6

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands."

Gift of God" is a "spiritual gift", such as we find especially in 1 Corinthians 14, Ephesians 5, and Romans 12. The gift does not consist in one being able to do something, not in someone's ability, but one receives the gift on the basis of the ability. I take as example Matthew 25, the parable of the talents. The Lord, the Master, the King, gives his personnel different talents, on the basis of their ability. "To every man according to his several ability" (verse 15). The gift is therefore not the ability to do something, but that one may also do what one can. Thereafter one should practise that in the service of the Lord. Naturally there are so-called "miraculous gifts", but those are not the norm. The "gift of God" is a responsibility that Timothy has received from God. But immediately afterwards it stands "which is in thee by the putting on of my hands". He also received that responsibility from Paul. Paul more or less appointed Timothy, "put him into the ministry". Transferred responsibilities to him, pictured in the figurative words: "by the putting on of my hands". But then indeed from God's side and therefore it is "the gift of God".

The translation of the word "stir up" in "that thou stir up the gift of God" is rather difficult, because it occurs only here in the Bible. But it means something like "activate". The thought is clear enough: what he has received he should also practise. If you bear responsibility, that means nothing if you do not do something. It should be activated, come alive, be fervent, come up. Those words you find together here in "that thou stir up the gift of God". Paul at any rate feels himself co-responsible for Timothy's ministry and that is the reason for writing the epistle.

2 Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

"Spirit" here is in the sense of "disposition", a certain attitude. "Mind" is what it is called elsewhere (Philippians 2:5. Timothy is expected not to be "fearful", but powerful and

loving, because his ministry is directed to the building up of the faith of individual believers. That does however have an effect in a collective, in the church namely, and hence “love”. Thus not “the spirit of fear”, that of restraint, but “of power, and of love”. If there is one power, it is God and God is love.

“Sound mind” means that one knows one’s own limits. And that means one does not interfere too much with others. We are one in Christ and that should be promoted. Not in an organisational way, for that is even unthinkable, but through the building up of faith. Thereby our spiritual life becomes active and nourished. And that expresses itself in the fellowship that is experienced in practice.

John teaches that you can recognise true believers by their love for the Word of God and then by their love for “the brethren”. Timothy’s ministry is directed to that, though he occupied himself with the building up of individual believers.

2 Timothy 1:8

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;

This is a variant on Romans 1:16: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”.

“Ashamed” means that one is restrained, that one covers something up, and one should not do that. One should rather testify of our Lord. Paul also says: “nor of me his prisoner”. That is of course the same testimony. It concerns the words one has received from the Lord and passes on. Words that the Lord Himself testified and that the apostle Paul preached. It connects with 1 Timothy 6:3: “the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ”. Timothy should be a follower of Christ and a follower of Paul, as Paul is a follower of Christ. That is what they have in common.

From this verse one infers that Paul is in prison. Yet that does not stand here. In this verse he says he is “the prisoner of Christ”, and that is not the same as the prisoner of the emperor in Rome, though there is some connection. The whole church is described as “the prisoner of Christ” (Ephesians 4:1. If you are withdrawn from society, then you are imprisoned, for that is what the word means. Not so much the meaning of being locked up, but of being excluded. The original idea of a prison is that one is therein excluded from society, because he is a danger to society. Formerly as a prisoner you lost all your civil rights. That is no longer so now, but that is the original idea.

Insofar as we as Christians bear responsibility, it is for the church, but not for society. We are all in the “prison” and the head there is the Lord Jesus. That position of ours brings afflictions and suffering with it, and therefore Paul says: “be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God”. According as one is obedient to the gospel, the New Covenant, to that extent one suffers afflictions. Christians are weak in the world, because they stand outside it, but on the other hand “the power of God” works in them. That power of God is explained in verse 9.

2 Timothy 1:9-10

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

The power of God has “saved us”. Part of that is that He has “called us with an holy calling”. To make holy is “to set apart” to be able to devote to the service of God, “without the camp” (Hebrews 13:11, 13). Therefore it is called “an holy calling”. That is “not according to our works”. It does not proceed from us. “Not of yourselves” (Ephesians 2:8. It proceeds from God Himself and that stands here too. “According to his own purpose and grace”. In the Plan that God made with Christ we have received a share, because we belong to Christ. We have received these things “in Christ Jesus before the world began”. It is simple: God chose Christ and chose us in Him, insofar as we are in Him. If we are not in Him, then we are not chosen, and whether we are in Him is only on the basis of our faith. That responsibility lies with every individual human being. Everyone who believes receives a share in Christ, is joined to Him, and receives a share in His blessings. That is the story and that was laid down already “before the world began”. That is, God’s Plan dates from “before the overthrow of the world”.

These verses summarise the great New Testament truth, for what is discussed here is the content of the gospel, which also stands in the last word of verse 10. The “gospel” is literally “glad tidings”, the “good news”, but more particularly the preaching of the New Covenant. That has now been handed to us. That is, it has “been made manifest” by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 10 says that “our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death”. The expression “abolished” does not mean completely done away with, in the sense that it is then no longer there, but in the sense of “it no longer works”. It is still there, but it does nothing more. Death is still there, but its effect is gone. The other side of that is: “who hath... brought life and immortality to light”. For death is abolished because life has been revealed out of death. Here it is called “brought to light”. Through “death” there is life. When He had passed through death, He had risen from the dead. Death is also not the end of the story in our life. On the contrary, we have received eternal life. Death still works, but for us as believers that death means nothing in practice. “Death ain’t no big deal”, sang Jake Hess. “Life and immortality” means “incorruptible life”. It concerns life that is no longer subject to death.

That has been “brought to light through the gospel”. A long-awaited message, the announcement of what was promised, is finally made known. That is the meaning of the term in the New Testament. The glad tidings, the gospel, is the message that the Messiah has come and that He has brought life and immortality to light. The Old Testament promises have been fulfilled to us. In Old Testament times it was promised that one would become a child of God, and since the resurrection of the Lord Jesus believers are born again. They have also actually become children of God! The New Testament promise to children of God is that they will become “sons of God”. “Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17).

2 Timothy 1:11

Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles;

The Apostle thus comes back to the theme of the epistle. Namely to preaching, for Paul sets himself in his ministry of the Word as an example to Timothy, who is expected to have the same ministry. What then must be preached? That victory has been achieved over darkness, over death, over the devil.

Colossians 2:15

And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

The “prince of this world” and his personnel are made ridiculous. “Made a shew of”, it stands in effect. “Put to shame”, it used to be called. Nailed to the pillory. We should not underestimate the adversary, but on the other hand: we should live in the victory given to us in Christ. “We are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:37). And then we come back to some practical matters concerning the preacher of that gospel from verse 10. It stands in effect: “Whereunto I am appointed preacher, and apostle, and teacher of the Gentiles”. That is in principle three times the same. Not entirely, but they are corresponding terms. A teacher is a preacher. A preacher is a teacher, in practice. An apostle is both. In all cases it concerns passing on the Word. When it concerns preaching, that happens rather authoritatively. When it concerns teaching, as a teacher, it concerns instruction. The three different terms are evidently used to lay emphasis on the office (the function) as such. The term “apostle” gives Paul authority. Being a preacher and teacher does not. That authority is derived from the person of the Lord Jesus Himself. That is why the apostles with authority can communicate certain things to us and even provide explanations of Old Testament Scriptures. They do so from God’s side and inspired by God.

The term “teacher of the Gentiles” we have already discussed earlier (p. 20). The “apostle of the Gentiles” was Peter and Paul certainly does not contradict that in Acts 15. Paul counts himself among that Gentile people. He is therefore a “Gentile apostle”. An apostle of Gentile origin who preaches the gospel to the Jews to “provoke them to jealousy” (Romans 9–11).

2 Timothy 1:12-14

For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

The apostle Paul writes encouraging words to Timothy. Not only is Paul appointed “preacher, apostle, teacher of the Gentiles”; Timothy too is appointed preacher and Gentile teacher, for he was a Greek (Acts 16:3) who was then circumcised by the apostle Paul so that he could pass a little for a Jew.

“For the which cause I also suffer these things” means that he suffers because he is appointed “preacher, apostle, and teacher of the Gentiles” and more generally because of that ministry he has and because of the content of the preaching as he has set it out in the preceding verses 8 through 10. One should not take the word “suffer” too heavily, because that is not the general meaning of the term and because in connection with this passage it does not immediately come to the fore. Paul is not speaking here about having had such hard times, though that was often the case. The expression means that one submits to something or someone else. “Suffering” means that one “submits oneself to”. Paul knows in whom he has believed. To Him he is submitted and by Him he is led and thus he suffers. Suffering is passion, being driven, that is, one is driven or led by something or someone else. That responsibility the apostle Paul has is determining

for his life. About that life he has not much more to say himself and that is called suffering. That sets Paul as an example to believers in general and here in particular to Timothy.

“I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” is the short version of the biblical teaching that where a believer truly submits to the Lord and thus also suffers for Him (Philippians 1:29, he will be rewarded for it in the future. If something is kept, it must be kept for a certain occasion in the future. That is called here “against that day”. Which day that is is not stated. Paul is speaking of a future judgment over his own practical service. Over his service to the Lord. And about that he said in:

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

From the terminology used and the context in 2 Corinthians 5 it appears that Paul is speaking of “the rapture of the church”, or: the change of the church as such. When we as the church shall receive our glory. Shall receive reward and be clothed, or rather clothed upon. That is our future expectation. It concerns the works of faith that will be manifested. “Things done in the body”. “Good” does not mean that we have been good citizens, but that we have served the Lord. “Bad” you then immediately know what it is. This does not of course concern our sins. If only because “the Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). It concerns possibly receiving reward according to labour.

2 John 8

Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

In 2 John it concerns remaining faithful to the truth, for which we “may receive a full reward”. The thought is that this reward is fixed in advance. Nothing more can be added to it, but something can be lost from it as a result of unfaithfulness to the Lord. The Lord has a certain place for each of us in the church. In that connection He gives us a responsibility or even responsibilities and we should “prove” (Romans 12:2 what that place is and what “the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” is for our lives. Accordingly we should walk. Let us spend those gifts, is the call. When we do that, we receive the reward that stands for it. That is simply fixed. One can however be unfaithful to it and then one loses “those things which we have wrought”. Then one does not receive a full reward. What it concerns is that we should reach out for that. And thus “run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

It concerns in connection with that labour and that reward primarily faithfulness to “the doctrine of Christ”, for John immediately writes afterwards:

2 John 9-10

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:

It therefore concerns in the first place remaining faithful to the doctrine, to the “dogma”, which is another word for “teaching”. God teaches us through His Word and we should be faithful to that, whatever consequences that may have in the practice of our life.

2 Timothy 1:13

Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Verse 13: “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me...” Those “sound words” are “that which I have committed unto him against that day” from verse 12. And the same applies to verse 14: “That good thing which was committed unto thee keep”. Those “sound words, which thou hast heard of me”, Paul says Timothy should keep, or rather entrust in keeping to the Lord; to the One in whom we believe. The word of Christ is sound. The sound words of the Lord Jesus Christ we should therefore take to ourselves. God has given us those “sound words” (“the good deposit”) in His Word. That is what it always comes down to. Even when we say that God has given us the Holy Spirit, for He brings forth the Word of God (among others Acts 28:25. God has given us His Son. According to John He is the Word (John 1). What has God given us and what should we therefore keep? His Word. How should we keep the Spirit? By keeping the Word. How should we not grieve the Holy Spirit? (Ephesians 4:30 By being faithful to the Word. The same applies to “quench not the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19. How do you quench the Spirit? By being unfaithful to the Word. By not wanting to know that Word, while that Spirit would lead us precisely in it. One disturbs the working of the Spirit when one leaves the Bible closed.

“In faith and love which is in Christ Jesus”. Or: “in faithfulness and love which is in Christ Jesus”. Faith in the Word of God is faithfulness to the Word of God. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is faithfulness to the Lord Jesus. Where we love the Lord, we love His Word. If you do not understand the word “faith” in the Bible, replace it with “faithfulness” and vice versa. Then it often becomes much clearer, here too. For it concerns faithfulness. Then the word “love”. Both terms are expressions of “fellowship”, “union”. That is what faithfulness is. Faith is always primarily faith in what was spoken. Faith in someone’s word. Then it is faithfulness to that same word. One is expected to act in accordance with that word that was spoken. Our Dutch word “trouw” is the same as the English word “true” and then it suddenly means “truth”. Both concepts point to something that endures. Therefore “faithfulness” and “truth” are related concepts. Faithfulness is always faithfulness to the truth. You cannot be faithful to the lie, because the lie does not endure. Faith and love are both expressions that point to fellowship, in the first place with the Word, for that is what it concerns here.

Verse 14: “That good thing which was committed unto thee keep”. Everything the Lord gives us should be regarded as a “deposit”. A “pledge”, by the Holy Ghost (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:14, for the coming inheritance, for that is after all the goal. The work of God is not so much that we should become children of God, but sons of God. Everything we received when we became children of God, when we came to faith, should work together toward that goal (Romans 8:28. It is “God, who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit”, as a guarantee that the goal will be reached. Therefore it can be said “it is our deposit”, for it has been given to us. Therefore the Apostle can also say: “that which I have committed unto him”, for we entrust that to the Lord. It does

not concern our own work. It does not develop independently. It is and remains the work that the Lord, or the Holy Spirit, or God in us, would do (Philippians 1:6; 2:13). For that purpose we place our body, our life, at His disposal. That is what the Lord expects at least, so that He may do something with it. That does not always happen and hence there are so many born-again believers who evidently do not do that. I do not say that to judge, but because that is precisely what we should do. That is also the thrust of Romans 12, where it stands that we should present our bodies, for that is where that life dwells, “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”. We should therefore indeed give our lives to the Lord, after we have first received life from Him.

2 Timothy 1:15

This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

Who are Phygellus and Hermogenes? We do not know and that makes no difference, for if they have turned away from Paul anyway, then we need not know who they are either. Then they are not really important. They are named as people who have not remained with “the sound doctrine”, “the sound words” or “the good deposit”. That is problematic and in the Timothy epistles it plays a large role, already from 1 Timothy 1: “From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling”. That is the essence of these so-called “pastoral epistles”. The addressees are called to remain especially with what has been taught them, particularly by the apostle Paul, with reference to the many witnesses he mentions in 2 Timothy 2:2: “...the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses”. Those are primarily Old Testament Scripture passages. One should abide by them. But the great problem in Christendom is that one is always inclined again to depart.

How serious is it that someone leaves Paul, as long as one does not leave the Lord? We did not after all come to faith in Paul, but in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul here, however, is not speaking about himself, but about the doctrine, about the things he taught, for which he was responsible, the “deposit” entrusted to him. That has evidently been left, and that happens up to our own day. The teachings of Paul are often put in the background. The problem with Paul is namely that he says: we have here no earthly citizenship, in this world we have nothing to seek, we are a New Creation, seated with Christ in heavenly places. That is evidently a message people would rather not hear emphatically or read. But you cannot get away from Paul. If one rejects him, leaves his teaching, then one in fact rejects all New Testament truth. In theology one begins with the Bible, and then one departs. Then all kinds of human teaching come in its place. My father said: in those orthodox churches, they have no respect at all for the authority of the Bible. They pretend to, for those heavy Reformed churches are supposed to be Bible-faithful, but if you come with the Bible, they immediately lay something else over it. Then they have their own confession or something like that, but they have no real respect for the Bible. In evangelical circles they also call themselves Bible-faithful, but my experience now, for years, is that they have no respect at all for the Bible. The books of so-and-so, and the developments there and there, are more important in practice. Just like in the latter days of the Reformation, in evangelical Holland they have set the Bible aside and put the organisation, including “church discipline”, in its place. That the Bible speaks quite differently about it and moreover knows absolutely nothing of an

organisational structure escapes them completely. The biblical teaching is: Christ is the Head of the church (Ephesians 5) and we as believers are all brethren, fellow-servants perhaps, but “One is your Master; and all ye are brethren” (Matthew 23:8 and that is it.

2 Timothy 1:16-18

The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.

Paul speaks so kindly of Onesiphorus that the man must be dead—that is really the idea in the common Bible commentaries. They say he evidently died after he visited Paul in Rome. But that does not stand there and I do not draw it out either. What stands is that Onesiphorus, in contrast to Phygellus and Hermogenes, did not leave Paul, but served him and stood by him. He thus contributed to “holding fast the truth” and therefore also ultimately to the preaching of the Word and so forth.

“Onesiphorus” means not for nothing something like “that he bears profit”, or more shortly: “is useful”.

I think that “the house of Onesiphorus” (also named in 2 Timothy 4:19) is the designation of what we would call a “local church”. Not organised and institutionalised, but simply believers who know one another and come together. Search the word “house”, also in the plural, in the Bible and you will notice that it concerns local churches. Named after the one who arranges it.

Onesiphorus came specifically to Rome to visit Paul and stand by him in his relatively miserable circumstances. Also in Ephesus he evidently served Paul very well. Such a one may count on mercy from the Lord. “The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day”. That day is the same “day” as at the end of verse 12. That is “the day of Christ”, the day of paying out the reward. The day of the coming deliverance.⁸

2 Timothy 2:1 -2

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

This is in fact the thrust of both epistles to Timothy, and the epistle to Titus as well. For it concerns remaining with the teaching of the apostles in general and the teaching of Paul in particular. It still concerns that “deposit” one should keep, to which one should be faithful. These things are not only taught by Paul, but also by “many witnesses”, for everything he writes can be found in the Old Testament. Not that it is so clear there, or that when you read it there you would say, hey, that stands in the New Testament too, but the other way round yes. That is how it should be, for one should read the Old Testament in the light of the New. Unclear Scripture passages in the Old Testament become clear only in the New Testament, because they are cited and explained there. Thus the New Testament, in the epistle to the Ephesians, gives a further explanation of what is described in Ezekiel 34 and 37. And the church is indeed not revealed in the Old Testament, but made known. To reveal does not mean merely to make known, but

means that something of which one knew it existed has been brought to light, unveiled. That is, you know something is there, but a veil hangs over it.

Acts 17:11

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Paul gives teaching there, but how should you search the Scriptures for what Paul teaches if what Paul teaches was not known before at all? If it is true that it did not stand in the Old Testament. But it does stand in the Old Testament and he appealed to that, so that it could be searched out. From the day of Pentecost one was expected to consult the Old Testament, to check whether what the apostles preached was biblical. In Acts 2 Peter does not speak on his own authority, but refers to Scripture passages, some of which he even quotes in full. When later Paul speaks in Antioch in Acts 13, he does exactly the same; he quotes, and that happened quite often. It is therefore good to search out what the man taught. Also the Lord Jesus always and very emphatically taught with reference to “the Scriptures”. His contemporaries should conclude from the Scriptures that He was the Messiah. He could have said it Himself, but that is precisely what He did not do. For it does not concern what He would say of Himself, but what His Father said of Him. “...the Father that sent me beareth witness of me”, He says in John 8:18. That is also what the apostles later did. Now we still do the same, though in this time we can also refer to the New Testament Bible books, which reveal the mystery in the Old Testament Bible books.

The heroes of faith from Hebrews 11 are called in 12:1 “so great a cloud of witnesses”. The idea is that they still speak.

Hebrews 11:4

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

Abel still speaks through his history, which is recorded in the Bible. We therefore learn from that; for example that we should live by faith and not under the law. How do you live by faith? By grace, after the example of those Old Testament believers. From the expectation of the fulfilment of God’s promises. Those Old Testament believers stand as a model for church truth.

Paul says in verse 2 that Timothy should pass on what he has “heard of me” “to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also”, “commit” it stands. So that the Word should be preserved through the generations and thereby through the ages. From verse 3 the Apostle goes on to the practical consequences of that for Timothy and in fact for each one of us.

2 Timothy 2:3

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Paul’s first comparison concerns that Timothy, and thus the child of God in general, is “a good soldier of Jesus Christ”. That is simply a “soldier” and “warrior”, for it is war. “Thou therefore endure hardness”, for that is what the fight brings with it. Fight or war is no joke. If one is a good soldier of Jesus Christ, then one will indeed suffer hardship. That does not mean that hardship is a constant pressure, but it is there.

Philippians 1:29

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

In the first place this speaks of passion and being passionate, of full surrender. That brings hardship with it. We are soldiers. It is war, yet we stand only in the service of One: Jesus Christ and of no one else. We therefore stand in relation to Him and that is repeated several times in the following verses.

2 Timothy 2:4

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

Conversely: someone who “entangleth himself with the affairs of this life” does not serve in the war. But that last was the intention. The whole point is that if one “warreth”, one has nothing to do with such affairs. This is applied here to us, as soldiers of Christ. We should therefore, to sum it up, not worry. The question is whether we do or refrain from certain things “in the war of Christ” because of the cost. Are we devoted to the Lord? Do we leave aside “the affairs of this life”? For what it concerns is that the Lord will provide for you and me, even though that looks different in practice for each one. There are those who stand full-time in the service of the Lord, at their own expense, and for others it is different. Why I do not know. That is what the Lord arranges.

“That he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” and no one else. If you are indeed involved “with the affairs of this life”, then you must please the people who can cough up that living. Then you must take account of them and that should absolutely not be. On the contrary, for it is war. It concerns only one thing and that costs quite a lot in practice.

2 Timothy 2:5

And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

That is, “unless he strives lawfully”. There are rules and regulations in sport (the fight). One must keep to them—that is the idea—otherwise one is disqualified and can forget the crown, the prize. If we serve the Lord and expect reward from Him, then we should keep to the rules that apply. As far as we have read up to now, it concerns that someone who serves in the war should not “entangle himself with the affairs of this life”. The Lord would provide and that also stands in verse 6. It simply belongs together, but now it is another image.

2 Timothy 2:6

The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.

In plain English that is called “who carries apples eats apples”. If you transport a ship of apples, then you eat of those apples; that is what you live on. That is how it works. The husbandman who works his land is the first to eat of the fruits of that land. In 1 Corinthians 9 the Apostle discusses these things more extensively, because there he does not speak to Timothy, who is expected to have good understanding, but to the Corinthians, who are expected to be hard to teach. Verse 7 says for example: “Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?” And so

he brings more examples from which it appears that the labourer is the first to partake of the fruits of the harvest.

1 Corinthians 9:13-14

Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

A part of what was intended for the Lord was intended for the priests, for example food. If we therefore serve the Lord, then we have an altar (Hebrews 13:10 and we also eat of that. That applies to each one of us. We serve the Lord and He provides for us. Not according to our standards and not according to our forecasts, let alone our budgeting. What it concerns is that He provides for us, thus verse 14. Those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. It need not be so, for Paul says in verse 15: "But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me".

2 Timothy 2:7-9

Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.

From the moment there is talk of the Roman Catholic Church, the Word of God was at any rate "bound", or "put in chains". It was taboo for Christians as such. No one got it in their hands. Moreover there was only one who might explain the Bible, namely the pope. He does that in Latin, so that does not help. Afterwards in Protestantism exactly the same happened. The Word was brought within bounds. It was bound to conditions, who might explain it and how one should explain it.

In verse 7 Paul says: so pay attention to what I have just written, but know also: "the Lord give thee understanding in all things". That is always the last word. There are no other precepts.

Verse 8: "Remember". One should always be conscious "that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead", for that is the meaning. It does not concern the historical fact, but the fact that He lives. That He is active. For example with a work in you and me and in this case in Timothy.

Timothy is expected to have good understanding in connection with the fact that two titles of Christ are mentioned together here. Namely "of the seed of David" and thus the Heir of the throne over Israel. And on the other hand "Son of God" and that gives Him His kingdom over the whole creation. The Son of God will sit on the throne of David, for He is Son (Heir) of David. Why are these things said here by Paul? Because He, the highly exalted One, is the One we directly serve. One cannot trifle with that. We should take Him seriously and serve with full surrender. It is not just anyone you can sign up with and then walk away again.

It is on the one hand a warning and on the other hand encouragement. Do not worry about anything, then nothing can happen to you. You are in the service of the Most High. We are soldiers of Him.

About the gospel Paul says in verse 9: "Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds". The man was in prison when he wrote this, as though he were an evil doer.

But, he says, it makes little difference, for “the word of God is not bound”. We would say: what a pity that man is locked up, for he could have done such good work. But Paul says: the word is not bound, it goes on anyway. For it is the Lord Himself who occupies Himself with these things. The Lord would do the preaching, for that is His New Testament position as High Priest of the New Covenant. For He is the Word of God. He is the Faithful Witness. He is the Holy Spirit.

The word of God is not bound. It is not dependent on us. It reaches where it must. If someone is interested in biblical truth he will sooner or later run into it. The Lord sees to that. We then hope that He will use us for it, then we get a share, for we receive reward for that. What matters is our devotion, so that the Lord would use us. Otherwise He uses someone else.

2 Timothy 2:10

Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Do they not then have that “salvation”, the elect? Yes indeed, but Paul does not say that either. He says that “they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory”. That is “salvation with” and goes further than the salvation of our new birth. The intention is that we should share in the glory of Christ, for the church is after all His “ecclesia”, His representation of the people. We share in His kingly and priestly position. We are children of God and are therefore saved, but we are also predestinated, “foreordained” (among others Ephesians 1:11. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13 the Apostle says it thus: “...that God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth”. That concerns believers, for the verse begins with: “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord”. Then growth should follow. Through the Spirit in practice therefore. Verse 14 of

2 Thessalonians 2:

“Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

That is that “salvation” here in verse 10, which in verse 8 is called “my gospel”. Paul says in effect: therefore I endure all these things, for the sake of the brothers and sisters, that they too may obtain that glory of Christ.

2 Timothy 2:11

It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; Through “it is a faithful saying”—that is, a “lasting saying”—the emphasis is automatically placed on what follows. “For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him”. This is of course not open to question. Because “one died for all, then were all dead” (2 Corinthians 5:14 is never open to question in the Bible. The misunderstanding that may cling to this verse is that one recognises the word “shall” as the auxiliary verb of the future tense and therefore concludes it evidently concerns the future. Then we died with Him in the past and in the future we shall live with Him. But that is not the meaning of the expression. “Shall” does not automatically speak of a future time. It is a linguistic designation, independent of the clock. The word “shall” closely resembles the German “sollen”. It is actually the same word. But “sollen” must not be translated as “shall” in English, for then one is mistaken. “Sollen” has the meaning of “must” in the

case of: if the one is so, then the other must also be so. That word points forward and in application establishes that something will happen. It flows logically from one thing or another, so that the future more or less presents itself. The thought is simply this: if it is true that we died with Him and He rose, then we must also have risen with Him. But I could also have said: then we shall have risen with Him. That is called “the past future tense”. That has actually nothing to do with time. Verse 11 does not speak of a future resurrection, but of the logical consequences of what stands in:

Romans 6:5

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection;

And therefore also, though it does not stand there, in the likeness of His ascension. It therefore concerns drawing logical conclusions. In verse 8 of Romans 6 it stands in exactly the same way.

Romans 6:8

Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him;

In both texts “shall” stands, but the thrust of it is that it does not speak of a still future point in time, but of something that has already happened in the past. In the sense of: if the one is true, then the other will logically also be true. It is a “law”. That “shall” is used for drawing conclusions, namely: if you believe this, then you must also believe that.

Romans 8:11

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

A mortal body is still alive and evidently means: lives according to the old man. But those mortal bodies are already being quickened now, to a higher standard, because the Spirit of God comes into that mortal body. For the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus, or Christ, from the dead, shall quicken our still mortal, and thus not even yet dead, bodies.

2 Timothy 2:12-13

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

It concerns the enduring in verse 10: “therefore I endure all things” and the afflictions in verses 9 and 3. “Suffer” is simply “bear” and continue bearing, our responsibility, we shall also “reign with him”. That little word “him”, the designation of the Lord, does not stand in Greek. It stands shorter: “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him”, evidently with Christ. We shall learn to serve to be rewarded for it with glory afterwards. That is the familiar biblical theme. The way to exaltation runs through humiliation. The way to a New Creation runs after all through this old sinful world. Why that is so I do not know. I cannot find it in my Bible. But that it is so admits of no doubt. And that principle also applies to us.

It concerns “bearing” and that is something active. That also appears from the context. Timothy is not simply given a bit of courage for everything they do to him. That he should just hold on well and just keep hope for the future, after which everything will be fine. No, he is urged to continue where he is busy. Even passionately. Thus not: if we suffer without doing anything, but actively, on the way to a crown, reward, and throne. Or in other words: glory, inheritance, sonship.

“If we deny him”. This does not concern “I never knew you: depart from me” (Matthew 7:23. One should ask oneself, for I begin for a moment with verse 13, in what is He faithful? Or to what is He faithful? The Bible says: to Him who appointed Him. Faithful is He to the commission He received.

Hebrews 3:2, 6a

Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house... But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we...

Christ remains faithful to God who appointed Him. In what or to what could we be unfaithful? To exactly the same, to Him who appointed us. Here it stands: even if we give up, He continues. That is also the background of verse 13. It is grace that we may be involved in His work. His work always continues, in one way or another, of course even if we are unfaithful. He cannot deny Himself. He is faithful to Himself (Romans 3). That cannot be otherwise, for He is not only appointed from God's side, but He is the revelation of the Godhead. The Bible teaches that.

Just as Moses, as a type of the Lord Jesus, was faithful “in all his house”, that is, in relation to his people, Christ is faithful to His people. Christ, however, is faithful “as a son”. As the Heir and not “as a servant”, as is said of Moses in verse 5.

In 1 Timothy 3:15 we have already seen that “the church of the living God” is “the house of God”. And in Hebrews 3:6 it stands: “Whose house are we”. We form part of the house of God. What does that mean in practice for us? That we should live under the reign of grace and thus “come boldly unto the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16).

The Lord is in practice faithful only to those who “hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (Hebrews 3:6b). There is need of “confidence”, unhindered, to distance oneself from the reign of the law and appeal to the reign of grace and live from it. That begins with expressing it and then we follow our own words. But, verse 12, “if we deny him”, namely “the confidence”, then He will also deny us. Not in the future, but in the present. Simply: if we do not want to serve Him anyway, why would He equip us for that service? The responsibility for whether that happens or not lies with ourselves. For the sake of good order: this does not concern our eternal salvation at all, but our salvation in relation to our inheritance promised to us. For to that end we became children of God, so that we should be “sons” (heirs). If we deny Him, we are still a child of God, but whether we ever become a son is another matter.² Timothy 2:12-13 has an effect in the future, but that is on the basis of our present life and ministry. That is really what the whole epistle is about.

2 Timothy 2:14

Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.

That connects with verse 8: “Remember”. First Timothy himself must be “mindful” in order then to be able to pass them on, so that others may also be mindful of those things. Thereby he refers back to verse 2: “the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also”. It concerns passing on the things that are “in remembrance”, but then not with “strife about words”. Unfortunately we have far too many examples of that in theology. For example in connection with the doctrine of the Trinity. That is pure strife about words. Just like the discussion about the Lord's Supper in the days of the Reformation. Or which words are used in the change of bread into the flesh of Jesus, the

“transubstantiation” in the Roman Catholic Church. That is strife about words to maintain one’s own dogmas. It serves no purpose. It makes no sense. It gets you nowhere. It keeps you busy and fills the time. It is all “to the subverting of the hearers”. One becomes confused by it, while it should concern the building up of believers.

2 Timothy 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Timothy should be a proven workman of God if he brings these things to remembrance. “Proven” means “tested” and thus with experience. “Study” means one should “strive” for that. This workman, overseer, should strive to present himself approved to the church. A “workman” in the service of God for the church. “That needeth not to be ashamed” means: “that is not disappointed”. Such a workman could possibly be ashamed if he denies the Lord. For He will then also deny him and thus disappoint him. The result of “that workman” is that believers come to maturity. That is what “the word of truth” would do, which the workman “rightly divides”. “Divides” is the word for “divide”. “Classify” you could also say, “divide into parts”. How does it fit together? In English “rightly dividing the word of truth” is rather a hard expression. That gives some the opportunity to say that the Bible consists of different parts that have nothing to do with each other. Therefore we should “divide the word of truth”. Those who claim this are then the only ones who do it in the right way...This is the standard verse on which people often wish to base “the teaching of dispensations”. I am a devoted adherent of the dispensational teaching in general, but I really do not need this verse for that. I really think the verse does not speak at all of dividing God’s plan of salvation into dispensations. I think that in “rightly dividing the word of truth”, for that is really the meaning of the term, it concerns the literary structure of the Bible as such. Peter said: “You must compare Scripture with Scripture, for no prophecy is of any private interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20, paraphrased). Scripture is brought forth by only One, Peter writes. That means you must compare those prophecies with one another, because they come from one and the same Source. They do not stand alone. They are parts of a whole. Where we receive one whole, in the form of one Bible, it is wise to see that they are parts that refer to one another.

We are all familiar with our Bible, divided into books brought together. Those books are again divided into chapters, that happened only very late, and then also into verses. That is only a few hundred years ago. And further we have a division into pericopes, or paragraphs. Books, what is written, one always divides to be able to see “the connection of things”. Timothy should do that in the right way.

2 Timothy 2:16

But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

The “strife about words, to no profit”, is profane, because God has no part in it. With “vain babblings” one calls loudly, one perhaps even has a strong text, but yet without content. It is therefore “empty”, and that is the meaning of “vain”. Quite a lot of preaching, quite a lot of religion, is nothing other than only words. It does not build up. It is only confusing. “They will increase unto more ungodliness”. Paul is not speaking here of unbelievers. I assume this is addressed to believers in the church who occupy

themselves with “profane and vain babblings”. The believers who do this “will increase unto more ungodliness”. Of them it then stands:

2 Timothy 2:17-18

And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;
Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already;
and overthrow the faith of some.

They already knew what cancer was in former times. Cancer as it were eats up the healthy body cells. It is tissue that develops, but serves absolutely no purpose and is harmful to healthy tissue. One dies of it. Cancer has something of leaven. It becomes bigger and bigger and bigger. The same applies to “profane and vain babblings” among children of God. That is the working of death. It seems quite something, swells up, just like leaven, but in reality it is the working of corruption. Leaven is a picture of false doctrine.

The name “Philetus” means something like “lover”, but in this case not of the words of God. Hymenaeus we already encountered in 1 Timothy 1:20. He had in practice loved something else and had even got into “a heavy marriage”. He had let go of the faith, and what he then preaches or does can be nothing other than “profane and vain babblings”. It is nothing other than directing oneself to the world and marrying it. We should of course not do that, for the following applies to us.

Colossians 1:13

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

If one lets go of the faith, or departs from it, one automatically comes to the world and to the law, and that principle “eats on”. Hymenaeus and Philetus “have erred concerning the truth” and that is of course the same as “departing from the faith”. Thereby one also departs from the light and naturally comes into darkness, into ignorance. And then something like comes: “saying that the resurrection is past already”. What they then exactly teach does not stand there, but it makes no difference, for in any case it is not true. Why should we know exactly how unbiblical teachings are constructed? “That the resurrection is past already” is an old thought, but exists up to our day. One has always wanted to reason away the resurrection or one denies it outright, despite Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, in almost a whole chapter, clearly replying to those thoughts about the resurrection. “And overthrow the faith of some”. “Overthrow” is “make crooked”, “bring a twist into”. (Note: the user’s message ends here, so the translation covers up to the provided text. If further continuation is intended, please provide the remaining text.)

2 Timothy 2:19

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

“This seal” is “this mark” or “this stamp”. Naturally the Lord knows who are His, but that is not what it is about. “The Lord knoweth them that are his” means: The Lord has fellowship with those who are His. For “to know” is “to have fellowship”. That is really the meaning of the term. The Lord cares for those who belong to Him, and we may count on the care of the Lord, who knows what is in us. He cares for those who are a New

Creation in Christ. Do we want the Lord to care for us? That is fine, but then we should submit to Him and serve Him.

“Every one that nameth the name of Christ” is “every one that confesses the name of Christ”. Followed by: “depart from iniquity”, namely what was mentioned in the previous verses. Such as “not rightly dividing the word of truth”, “profane and vain babblings”, and “erring from the truth”. In short: depart from evil. The good thing about believers is that they “speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things” (Ephesians 4:15). The evil is precisely departing from the truth and thus letting go of the Word of God. In this case it is called “iniquity”, for righteousness is faithfulness to what is right. Since what is right is by definition the Word of God, iniquity is therefore departing from the Word of God and therefore completely identical to unbelief and disobedience.

2 Timothy 2:20

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

That “great house” is the church. It is the repetition from 1 Timothy 3:15, where it stands that “the church of the living God” is “the house of God”. “The pillar and ground of the truth”. If one departs from that, one is doing wrong. The word “vessels” stands for “utensils” or “instruments”. Since the vessel is the first object man uses, the word has from of old been used for all forms of tools. In a great house there are not only golden and silver objects, things that are used, subordinate. In grammar that is called “the governing object”. There is also “the object governed”, but it remains subordinate. Thus we are “the object of God’s love” in rather older English. In a great house there are also wooden and earthen vessels. The idea is that you find that in the church too. Among believers you find those who are of great value, but also those who are of no value really. It is not pleasant, but it is how it is. The difference is there and hence the other distinction: “some to honour, and some to dishonour”.

2 Timothy 2:21

If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.

“If a man therefore purge himself from these vessels to dishonour, he shall be a vessel unto honour”. “Sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” we place beside chapter 3:17: “That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”. That can only be through Scripture, verse 16 says. It is not only the intention that we purge ourselves from “vessels to dishonour” and after we have done that everything is fine. And conversely exactly the same: we can be instructed by Scripture and if that happens, everything is fine, we think. That is not so either, for one should also purge oneself from those “vessels to dishonour” and thus “depart from iniquity”. That flows from the instruction from Scripture. The intention is that we learn from it for the practice of our life and thus learn that we should purge ourselves from vessels to dishonour.

“Those vessels to dishonour” are described here in the context. It does not immediately concern people who take no notice of God and His command; who do not correspond to a certain ethic. It concerns people who are unfaithful to the Word of God, depart from it, and deny certain things from Scripture. That is dangerous and from that one should depart, this verse says. In 2 Corinthians 6 the Apostle writes:

2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Here it is established that believers have nothing to do with unbelievers. That we have nothing to do with the world or with darkness, and should not be involved in or with it. One should separate from it. The Apostle here is not only speaking of separation between believers and unbelievers, but also between “the spiritually minded and the carnally minded believers or worldly minded believers”. Sincere believers, who seek the truth, have nothing to do with the world, but also not with those believers who in practice live in the midst of the world. Even more strongly, it is said: “wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing”. 7:1 then also says: “dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit”. That is, pollution of “a carnal spirit”, a worldly, an earthly mind, governed by Belial from 6:15, namely the devil himself, the prince of darkness. And then further: “perfecting holiness in the fear of God”. That is exactly the same truth as in 2 Timothy 2:21: “he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work”. To that believers should reach out. That is the goal of our sanctification, for “sanctification” in 2 Corinthians 7:1 means withdrawal from the world as such and devotion to the service of God. And thus:

2 Timothy 2:22

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

A young person is inclined to direct himself to the world, to find his place in it, to take a place among it and to achieve something in it. That is after all the nature of man, the old nature. It naturally runs into a series of disappointments, great or small, and then that “youthful lusts” hopefully, and usually, stops. Not always, for some people are hard to teach and have no alternative. One should find peace and contentment, “contentment”, in oneself and in the community of which one forms part in one way or another. That is of course that of believers and that stands here too: “follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace”. If you really pursue that, you achieve nothing in the world. For that righteousness does not exist in the world. What should you believe (= trust) in the world? Love and peace have never been in the world and never will be, however much one tries for it. Especially because the world is governed by “the liar from the beginning and the father of it” (John 8:44). And thus these things are not possible in the world. Righteousness, faith, love, and peace point to unity, namely union. If everything is right, there is fellowship. If there is something one can trust in, then that unity and fellowship arises. That is also what love is and what peace is, for peace presupposes the bond

between two parties. That is the original meaning of the term, but it is not in the world. One should strive for that and indeed with those “who call on the Lord out of a pure heart”. With the like-minded therefore. Notice that it does not stand: with the believers, or with all born again, or with all children of God. You read nothing like that anywhere. For it is not the intention that we associate with those “vessels to dishonour”. That is the story from one side, but that does not say everything.

2 Timothy 2:23

But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. For example questions about the Trinity. The whole word, and also the concept, does not stand in the Bible and therefore we have nothing to do with it. Someone once asked me: what do you think of infant baptism? Without hesitation I said: nothing, for it does not occur in the Bible. End of story. All questions about it are therefore “foolish and unlearned”, because it has nothing to do with the whole Scripture, which should be for instruction (2 Timothy 3:16. Most disputes in the course of church history really had nothing to do with the Bible. It was always about other things. Such questions one should reject. Simply not engage with them.

Timothy should indeed answer questions and he should answer them from Scripture. Of course he already knew that, but it is impressed upon his heart here. That is what it concerns and all the rest means nothing. “Knowing that they do gender strifes” is not new here. We already encountered it earlier in the first epistle to Timothy. With that issue of those “fables and endless genealogies”. And in 1 Timothy 6:4: “...doting about questions and strifes of words...” There are after all questions that serve no purpose. One should reject them, because they are “unlearned”. Only dispute arises from them. They bring strife and discord. “Strifes”, “perversions” namely. A “strife” is a “twist”.

2 Timothy 2:24

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

That concerns naturally in the first place Timothy and thereby the overseers in general. But it is easy to show from the Bible that every child of God is “a servant of the Lord” and should not strive. That was not the intention. Nowhere does it stand that we must argue about the gospel, let alone about the whole Bible. Discussion has little sense, sometimes perhaps, but usually not. And certainly where one likes to argue, it has no sense at all, I know from experience. I have heard and seen discussions between believers and unbelievers. That really leads to nothing, because they are two worlds that have no common basis. The one does not believe in the Bible, the other reasons from the Bible and therefore one always talks past each other. You must be able to say what you believe and always “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15. But you need not argue about it. You share it and for some it applies that they should proclaim it. But that is not the same as arguing. I even think that we in a certain sense profane the Word by debating about it. What one can do is exchange thoughts, but that is usually something different. One can really only talk about it with other people who are also interested and beforehand willing to believe the Bible. Then one can show what you believe and why, for then you have a common basis.

A “servant of the Lord” should “be gentle unto all men”, behave as a friend toward all within the church, for that is what it concerns. And also “apt to teach”. To “patiently instruct those that oppose themselves”, the “adversaries”, because they contradict the Word of God, is sometimes not easy. The Lord Jesus Himself is an example of that. On occasion He became angry and His word was not exactly gentle toward those who were nullifying the Word of God. He went hard against the religious orthodoxy (Pharisees) and then against the liberalism of the Sadducees. He had nothing against sinners, as long as they believed, for that is what it concerns. He had problems with those Pharisees, those Sadducees, those hypocrites, who resisted it. No gentle words apply to that.

One should “patiently instruct” the evil ones, the ill-willed among the believers. Many teach that one must excommunicate the evil ones, throw them out, but apparently that should not be. If you throw them out, you have nothing more to endure. Incidentally believers cannot throw other believers out of the church, because it is the church of the Lord. The fellowship in it has come about from His Spirit and from nothing else.

However much responsibility the “servant of the Lord” has, he never has the right, or the duty, official or moral, to excommunicate or expel “the evil ones” from the assembly.

That does not occur in the Bible.

What we can and should do is “purge ourselves from vessels to dishonour”. That means we distance ourselves from those people, whether they are believers or not makes no difference. Not get involved with them. Keep distance. 1 Corinthians 5 speaks about that, where Paul sets forth that we as believers individually take a position and “cleanse ourselves from vessels to dishonour”. Not in the sense that we remove them from the house, but in the sense that we do not associate with them. The Bible teaches that we should be selective in that and that means I am not obliged to associate with everyone who calls himself a believer. We come together, but whether we also associate with one another in practice is still very much the question. We decide that ourselves.

2 Timothy 2:25-26

In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

“Those that oppose themselves” have departed and Paul knows that he cannot give such a one repentance to the truth, and Timothy cannot either. That follows from Hebrews 6.

Hebrews 6:4-6

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

They have to a certain extent received a share in the Holy Spirit. They have received Him, but evidently have not been filled with Him. They have “tasted the good word of God”, thus taken it to themselves, and thereby “tasted the powers of the world to come”. That is, the powers of the New Covenant. These verses therefore concern born-again people, believers, as also appears from the broader context of this passage. It concerns believers who—verse 6—“fall away”.

The question then is: from what? In any case not from the eternal life received when one “was enlightened and became a partaker of the Holy Ghost”. But as a Christian one can indeed lose the way and go in a self-chosen direction. In that sense one can “fall away and be lost”. Such a person is still saved, he will still enter heaven, but gets nothing more. That is not God’s intention. He desires to appoint us in glory as sons, and as a child of God you can miss that goal.

The main clause is: “After they have been enlightened, it is impossible for those who fall away to renew themselves again to repentance”. It does not say that those who fall away cannot afterwards repent, cannot turn back on their steps, cannot return to the Lord to live by faith. They can, but the apostle Paul says we cannot. What would we want to say to them? Something they have long known and consciously departed from? Then it practically stops. To my regret I have also sometimes been able to establish that in practice. You cannot succeed.

And therefore the Apostle says “a servant of the Lord must in meekness instruct those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth”, in the sense that they return to the truth, which they then acknowledge anew. As a human being you can do little about that, and Paul therefore leaves it with God. The question then is: will God do something about it? We do not know. As long as someone, however, is going full speed with his life and going his own way, the chance that such a one will yet come to the Lord is very small. The Lord only brings back those who are really straying—that is the story in the Bible of the shepherd and the sheep. But that concerns the well-intentioned, and that is what we as Christians, if all is well, live from. Some deliberately go their own course and we can do nothing about that, so there is nothing else but to leave it in God’s hands. Perhaps He will yet give them “repentance to the acknowledging”.

From Scripture it also appears that God on occasion gives no repentance at all. Then we read that God hardens someone’s heart, as if: there has been opportunity enough, if you do not want it now, then it is over. We all know that is not the case.

In any case it is possible to “recover themselves out of the snare of the devil”. That is the snare of “God hath said, but He meant something else” (Genesis 3). That is for example the word of theologians, and if those are born-again people, then “they sleep in the snare of the devil”. Then they have departed from the truth and we can do nothing about that.

We can often do something for people who do not know the truth or know it insufficiently, or who are well-intentioned yet straying. That is Timothy’s first responsibility. In that connection I point once more to:

1 Timothy 4:16

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

There is nothing more to say about that and all the rest is human. “Take heed unto thyself” is our first and greatest responsibility, and not take heed to another. Take heed to what Scripture teaches. In that we should even continue, for that seems problematic, otherwise it would not be called “continue”. Only in that way “thou shalt both save thyself”—in the limited sense of the term—“and them that hear thee”. That is how it works.⁹ 2 Timothy 3

2 Timothy 3:1-4

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

2 Timothy 3:1 connects with:

1 Timothy 4:1

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.

In 2 Timothy 3 it is essentially exactly the same. It stands: “for men shall be lovers of their own selves” and everything that follows is the outworking of that. Verse 4 says: “...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God”. Thereby the circle is complete, for it concerns lovers of their own selves and “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” is the last point and corresponds to the first. All the rest forms part of that. Then man stands central, but by biblical standards God stands central, then the Lord stands central.

2 Timothy 3:5

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. The Apostle here is not speaking about people in general, but about believers, about those who call themselves or let themselves be called Christians. He says of those “lovers of their own selves”: they have “a form of godliness”. Then they are at least religious in the sense of godly. They show a “fair show” (Galatians 6:12 to people, but it is a cloak and the same as a “whited sepulchre” (Matthew 23:27. On the outside it all looks good, but what is inside is no good, because they do not let the Lord into their life. The outward form of religion, and certainly of the law, is that one keeps to certain rules. One knows how to behave properly, but that is form, appearance, the outside, image. On the outside it all looks good, but the inside therefore not. The “power of that godliness” is the inward, and they have denied that, because they are “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God”. The “power of godliness” is described in:

Ephesians 1:19-20

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

“Power, working, might, strength” are four synonyms and then added to that “exceeding greatness”. That is that “power of godliness”, which “God wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead”. That resurrection power of Christ works in us. Thereby God makes our “mortal bodies” alive (Romans 8:11. Naturally you cannot bring that power under a law. It therefore does not concern that “form of godliness”. Concerning what looks “Christian” on the outside. Timothy’s greatest responsibility was not “polishing” the believers. What is needed is that man be changed inwardly. Perhaps it works out to the outside, that is also somewhat the intention, but it is not really the goal. The goal is that we be changed in our being. That outside is after all temporary, so why worry about it. The “inward man” (2 Corinthians 4:16, the mind and the heart, should be changed, with the result that it then also works out in our manner of life.

About these “lovers of their own selves” it is said very briefly: “from such turn away”. That is, “turn away from”. You simply do not look at it, you pay no attention to it, you take no notice of it, do not occupy yourself with it. It does not stand: fight against it. One must after all protect oneself and not let oneself be carried away in a direction one knows beforehand is not the right way. Therefore for example in Romans 12:9 it stands: “...Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good”. Here this is not even said to believers in general, but in particular to Timothy, because he has a certain ministry and should not let himself be distracted by all kinds of figures. Timothy will probably not let himself be distracted by strict unbelievers, but the chance is great that he will let himself be distracted by believers, under the motto: they are my brothers and sisters. He is warned against that. But these things apply as a principle just as much to believers in general. Those who do not love the Word at all and try to keep up a fair appearance, from those you should have aversion, it stands here. Not to be nasty, but to be able to devote yourself fully to the good.

2 Timothy 3:6-7

For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

“For of this sort are they” and thus not: these are they. “Of this sort”, those described in verses 2 through 5, there are also those who moreover correspond to the description of verse 6 and further. Among them you also find “they which creep into houses”. It is quite something that is described here about people “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof”. They creep into houses, that is, into families. A house is a family, a household. They interfere with that. They come in there, probably also literally, but they at any rate interfere with the life of those people. That is of course none of their business. But they do it anyway and “lead captive silly women” and not the men. For they lay claim to the women.

In practice it is exactly about what stands here, namely “silly women laden with sins”. “Sins” are “failures”. With “sin” it is “without”. Then it is beside and thus a failure. It concerns women where it always goes wrong. Who always have problems and always need help and who moreover by nature naturally lay claim to others. I do not mean it sexually. “Silly women” here is not a friendly diminutive. It concerns women who always have problems and for whom care must always be taken. The Apostle says he knows that and warns Timothy against it. He does it reservedly and does not explain it at length. But he does say that they are: “led away with divers lusts”. And also that they are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth”.

This is not the general description of how it is with women, but there are specifically such women “ever learning”. They find everything interesting, but never know what. They do not take it in for some reason. They never acquire knowledge. With women that happens much more often than with men, because the woman is after all more directed to the outward than to the inward. She also typologically represents the outward things and therein she is also primarily involved. That makes it logically more difficult for her to make things her own, to take them in permanently. I know many women will not like this, but that is simply how the situation lies in the Bible. It makes no mystery about it.

Naturally it is not black and white, but generally it is so, in general. So you can indeed describe it and that is what the Bible does too. But notice that the Apostle here does not

warn against “those silly women”. He warns against the men who take advantage of that, after they have crept into the houses. About them it continues in verse 8.

2 Timothy 2:8

Likewise also these resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

First it concerns those women, and now those men, namely “Jannes and Jambres”. They do not appear elsewhere in the Bible, but they do in the Talmud, in Jewish tradition therefore. These were two of the magicians who withstood the word of Moses and Aaron and also performed wonders before Pharaoh by performing wonders too (Exodus 7:11. Those two withstood Moses, and so these also “resist the truth”. For if one stands for the truth, one simply preaches it. This sort of cunning methods used here, according to the preceding verses, is resisting the truth, for in reality all sorts of things happen in secret. That is not sincere and is unworthy of the truth. To bring people the gospel in a cunning way seems to me also a complete impossibility. For it precisely concerns truth, sincerity. That is exactly what the gospel is, in contrast to the world in which the truth is systematically “held in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18. It is manipulation, and we as Christians should keep far from it.

Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses with their sorcery, with their tricks. They were sorcerers, that is, they were “bewitched”, as it is called with the words from Galatians 3:1: “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth...” Which therefore implies that it has to do with demonism. You should not be too frightened of that, for the whole world is in the power of Satan and demons work everywhere. We only notice it when unnatural or supernatural things happen. Here it is suggested, just as in Galatians, that there is the working of Satan, at any rate through his personnel. In Galatians those who hold to the law are supposed to be bewitched, for it is supposed to be demonic. Those are very strong terms, but that is exactly how it stands in the Bible. Here too that lies behind it, for Jannes and Jambres were sorcerers. It is a subtle way of saying that we are dealing with demonism in the situation described here. With cunning things that ultimately lead nowhere but that do take hold of people. For that is primarily what demons do: they lay hold of a person. They prefer to dwell in a person and take 100% possession of him. Sometimes that happens less seriously, but the phenomenon as such is yet a clear phenomenon.

The chance exists—I say it reservedly, but yet also hopefully clearly—that if we deal with people with whom we can have no contact concerning the truth, the chance exists that we are dealing with demonism. For demons creep preferably into a person and then “close the shutters”. By that I understand that communication is no longer possible. You can exchange words, but it does not penetrate. It is blinding, or hardening of the senses, which precisely serve for communication. If one can yet talk with them, then you know at any rate that you are dealing with demonism. I can assure you that that is not pleasant. But well, I do not want to say more about that.

Jannes and Jambres, as sorcerers, are supposed to have actively occupied themselves with those occult matters. What the Apostle at least suggests here is that those named here are of exactly the same nature. That is demonism. The devil and his personnel have little to seek in the world, for that is their domicile. That world they already have in their power. Their natural adversaries are we, and therefore we as believers are always in a fight.

Ephesians 6:12

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

In practice it looks like a fight against flesh and blood, but in reality it is a fight against “principalities and powers, spiritual wickedness in high places”. The popular thought is that if you are born again, you no longer have trouble from that. But that is not true. For some it applies that they have trouble from it, because they are susceptible to it. They are receptive, and that is primarily women and secondarily men. People who are sensitive to it should also keep far from this sort of thing. They have an interest in leading a simple and sincere life, so that they are not driven from their path. For others that is less important, also less dangerous. But there are also those who consciously seek it. Not so much consciously seeking demonism, but consciously seeking spiritual things. Religious mania is in many cases simply demonism. Religious mania occurs much among legalistic people, orthodox Christians. All religion is demonic. The devil keeps man busy with outward things. Therefore he uses women to seduce people, for they also primarily occupy themselves with outward things. Occultism is found especially among women

Jannes and Jambres “resist the truth” and that places them on the level of the father of lies, the devil (John 8:44. All resistance to the truth is at any rate the work of Satan, whether one is conscious of it or not. Thereby they are “men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith”. “Minds” not immediately to be understood as intelligence, but for “the inward man”. There officially the thinking resides. Whether it is called mind, heart, spirit, inward man or heart, in practice it makes no difference. The “conscience” is something smaller. That is a function of the inward man. It is really the “co-knower”. Thus the conscience knows that there is a God and that there exists something like love, righteousness, truth. We know those words without actually knowing what they are in practice. The idea is that we naturally, as implanted, have knowledge of those concepts. Then it was the intention, Acts 17, that we search for these things. If we search sincerely, then we find the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul says. The beginning of that is the conscience.² Timothy 3:9

But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

If one departs so far, it becomes manifest of itself. And now the word “folly” stands, that is that sorcery in connection with Jannes and Jambres. “Folly” concerns “the senses”, “the faculties of perception”, our power of perception. It concerns seeing, hearing, touching. It entirely concerns us and thereby it is much broader than what we call the senses. “The senses” is the ability to “grasp” something, to see coherence. It does indeed have to do with mind and intelligence and thus also with receptivity. “To be foolish” means that one is “no longer receptive” and thus folly in practice is to a high degree the same as demonic. For that is what demons do: disable senses, disable faculties of perception, whereby communication is broken. Outwardly that looks like “men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith”. Those people lack the ability to grasp what has been explained to them. Sometimes because there is actually active demonism at play. There are therefore also born-again people who consciously say: no, I do not want to know that. The tragedy of 2 Timothy 3 is that these things are said about believers, that is, about born-again people, who yet resist the work of God as such and

evidently choose to live according to worldly principles, according to human philosophy. Thereby they deny the Lord, for that is what it comes down to in practice. One of the most important reasons it stands here is that in this sort of passage (see also 2 Peter 2) a judgment from God's side over born-again people, over believers, is announced. Over those who have set themselves up as enemies of the truth and thus have resisted the "work of the Lord". They functioned in practice as infiltrators. They did belong, but they actually served another party. Yes, that is very hard to say, but that is brought forward in several Scripture passages and this is one of them.

2 Peter 2:3

And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

The judgment over their unfaithfulness to God is determined beforehand; it stands here "and their damnation slumbereth not". That damnation will certainly come upon them. The whole thrust of the second epistle of Peter, however, is that God does not judge today, but will certainly do so in the future. That is the same thought as Romans 1 and 2, only here it is set forth broadly. Such a judgment will indeed come. And in verse 9 of 2 Timothy 3 that is also spoken of, but then for a somewhat shorter term. There it is said that those who behave as described here will at a certain moment during their life run "into the wall" of themselves. They fall through the net of themselves. For people who behave like this cannot keep it up in the long term. The Bible teaches that there will indeed be a judgment over our lives, our "souls", our manner of life, our works. The heaviest punishment is that you get nothing at all; then you stand there and the inheritance, the heritage, the reward passes you by. That is then called in 2 Corinthians 5:3: "be found naked".

That was the negative side of the story. The positive side follows from verse 10.

2 Timothy 3:10-11

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

Timothy is expected to be a follower of the apostle Paul in more than one respect, namely in his doctrine (which is fixed), his manner of life, his purpose, his faith (= his faithfulness), his longsuffering, his charity, his patience. Those are exactly seven things concerning the life attitude of the Apostle and thereby his attitude regarding his service to the Lord. That does not concern law, as though do this and do that, but truth, which is made known to us from God's side. Therefore Paul in particular is an example to Timothy, who is placed by "but thou" opposite those others from the first nine verses. Those people are not faithful to the doctrine and maintain a worldly manner of life. That is after all characteristic of the law. The law is simply the world. There is difference of law—the one man has a different law from the other—but they have in common that they live under law. And that is the world, for it is regulated. There are rules that are usually imposed by obligation. That corresponds to "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:17. Man dies by that; that is no life.

"Such as befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra" is the reference to "Paul's first missionary journey", but actually it was the missionary journey of Barnabas (Acts 13 and

14). During this missionary journey the persecutions break out. First in Antioch (Acts 13:50). The Jews there did not want the gospel and therefore caused an uprising against Paul and Barnabas. They did that in the familiar way, namely by harnessing the Gentiles to their cart. In Acts 2 you can already read how that went. Peter says to the Jews: "...ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain". It was the Jews who wanted to be rid of the Lord Jesus, but they had it carried out by the Romans. So it has remained, throughout Acts.

Acts 14:19

And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

I have the impression that Paul was really dead. They dragged him outside the city as a corpse and then he yet came back to life. For in verse 20 it stands laconically that the disciples stood round about him and "then Paul rose up". God raised him up, made him rise again at any rate. He did not even have to recover for a few days. He went back into the city and the next day they cheerfully set out on their journey. So I regard that as a miraculous healing. Paul therefore says: "what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me". One should be faithful to the Word, to the truth, instead of resisting it. That is a difficult matter, because the world by definition "holds the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18). Preaching the truth in the world therefore stands in bad odour. To tell someone the truth is something you are not supposed to do. But nevertheless that is our responsibility. The church has the responsibility at least to preserve that Word of God, but if possible also to preach it. That ultimately applies, in one way or another, to all members of the church. In many epistles the Apostle sets that one should be followers of him. For example in

1 Corinthians 11:1

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ".

Paul is the example for the church. But immediately the warning follows in verse 12.

2 Timothy 3:12

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Is "to live godly" possible outside Christ Jesus? The answer is no, for only in Him can we live godly. But if we want that, then we shall suffer persecution. That is the normal situation. Insofar as we are not persecuted, that is thanks to our modern open society. That society will ultimately go to ruin by it, but we gratefully make use of it. "To live godly" is a life in accordance, in submission, to the truth. That is rejected by the world and those who "will live godly in Christ Jesus" are therefore persecuted. If only because they thereby withdraw from society as such. They go out "without the camp" (Hebrews 13:13). Thus one stands outside society and the world usually does not tolerate that, except in our tolerant (= indifferent) times. But if we look at church history of 2,000 years of "last days and perilous times", then what stands here is confirmed regarding "shall suffer persecution". That happens through "evil men and seducers", who are named in verse 13.

2 Timothy 3:13

But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

With all those ideas one develops, philosophically and theologically, one first deceives oneself. I have developed a theory here—can I make it hold? Then one goes searching for that, and at that moment one is busy deceiving oneself. That is roughly how it works. If one can also convince others, one thinks on that basis one is right. Do others think so too? Can I convince others of my ideas? Then I am right. No, then you do not have right—you get right.

2 Timothy 3:14

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

The Apostle wants Timothy to remain steadfast, despite “evil men and seducers” who “shall wax worse and worse”. “Continue” is the same as “abide” or “dwell”. “Dwell thou in the things thou hast learned” is “continue in”. It is to live in the things thou hast learned. Living is where your thoughts go, where your ideals lie, what you strive for. This verse is widely abused. Then people say: that is not how I was brought up, and the Bible says “continue thou in the things which thou hast learned”. Whatever it was, and however much it may have consisted of lies. But well, that is of course not what it says. That would be rather naive, for why then would you preach the gospel to the Jews? Here reference is made to the source of what Timothy has learned, namely Scripture, the Lord Himself. For that stands in verse 16. But first verse 15, where it points to “the holy scriptures”.

2 Timothy 3:15

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Timothy learned it from his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois, and that was a reliable source (1 Timothy 1:5. With the great advantage for Timothy that he knew the Scriptures “from a child”. What you take in as a child you do not lose again, even if you wanted to. That is why it is important what a child learns, preferably as young as possible and preferably unconsciously. Then it is in him, and then it is harder to lose it again. The norm is therefore the Scriptures, and not even the oral tradition of the parents or of the one who taught a child something.

“Which are able to make thee wise unto salvation”. Does someone who knows the Scriptures then also become wise unto salvation? Unfortunately not always. For one can also know the Scriptures as a hobby, from historical interest, or to teach them. Or to know better than someone else. One should, however, make the Scriptures one’s own in all sincerity. The purpose of taking in knowledge is that it becomes one’s own. As part of our being and thereby of our personality. When we thus come to know the Scriptures, they make us wise unto salvation.

James 1:21

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

It stands: “which is able to save”, just as in 3:15: “which are able to make thee wise unto salvation”, for it depends on what we do with that Word (the Scriptures). That is the thrust of the epistle of James. For it immediately adds: “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only...” If the Word remains only theory and does not come to expression in the practice of life, then it does not save the soul. That cannot, for “the soul” that will be

saved is after all “the practical life”. The soul is “the manner of life”, what one does in practice. It concerns being faithful to the Lord and to His Word. If one is that, one is also a blessing to others. That happens then as a matter of course. I think one of the great mistakes is that preachers specially address their audience and thus adapt to them. Then you get, for example, that you must not preach the gospel to Jews, because they do not want to hear it, or because they then become jealous and angry. My Bible says, however, that this is precisely the intention. That there is no other way to salvation. So if you love the Jews, you should bring them the gospel. Believers should be faithful to the Lord and to His Word, and the fruit of that is found in one’s own life. God does His work in us, and we grow from that.

My father always said: you master a subject only when you have spoken about it. That applies to everyone. If you cannot put it into words, or have never put it into words, then you do not yet know it. Then you do not master it. Therefore it is useful to do that on occasion. The Lord sometimes gives us opportunity for that too. And then we think: I must tell someone the gospel. But that is still very much the question. Perhaps it is for yourself, so that you yourself learn to put things into words and make them your own. For what a man says, he says first of all to himself. Thoughts take shape in words. “Through faith” is the condition mentioned with it. That is the prerequisite. Not a new one, for Paul already wrote that in the epistle to the Romans.

Romans 1:16-17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

“From faith to faith” is explained in Romans 3:22, and also in other places, as “from the faith of Jesus, unto the faith of those who believe in Him”. Here in 2 Timothy 3:15 it is also the case, for it stands: “unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”. He is faithful; it concerns His faith, and that is indeed the faith that is in Him. Otherwise you say through faith in Christ Jesus. The Bible teaches that we are saved through His faithfulness, the other word for faith. Because He is faithful, not to you and me, but to Him who appointed Him to that. Not only have we been saved as to the spirit when we were born again, but moreover it concerns our salvation of the soul. And then follows summarily in verses 16 and 17 a general statement, independent of the person of Timothy.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Paul says in Colossians 3:16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”. That is why we are together this evening and that is what we do, by taking “all scripture”, the whole Scripture, Scripture as a whole, to ourselves. All Bible books have surely but one Author, and that is God Himself. The Bible is one whole, the total of what God has left us in black and white. The Bible in itself is complete, and therefore it is not “all scriptures”, as in verse 15, but “all scripture is given by inspiration of God”.² Peter 1:19-21

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in

your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

“The prophetic word” is one “thing”, and something is prophetic if it comes to us from God’s side; if it is inspired by God. The whole Bible is thereby designated. The whole Bible is prophetic. Prophecy does not so much mean that it concerns the future.

Prophecy is the Word of God. Then we establish that also according to the Bible itself God by definition speaks about the future. Logically, for He is building something. God speaks, says Isaiah, by definition about the future, and therefore we think that a prophecy is a prediction of the future. But that is not correct. Prophecy is the Word of God, and thus we have “the prophetic word”, singular, just as in 2 Timothy 3, “that is very sure”.

Verse 20 concerns “no prophecy of the scripture”, singular, just as in verse 21 “the prophecy”. Those are all prophecies together, which formerly were indeed brought forth by “holy men of God”, but they were all “moved by the Holy Ghost”. There is after all but One. Therefore no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. That is, no single Bible book, let alone chapter, can be studied and explained in itself. One Scripture passage is laid beside another, again and again. All those different prophecies form part of the whole Scripture, which was written by one Writer. So that one is obliged according to Peter to read every prophecy, every chapter, together with all the rest in that Scripture. The Bible has but one content, which speaks about the Lord Jesus Christ, because that Bible has but one origin.

The Bible says it is the Word of God. If we accept that beforehand, then we subsequently compare “Scripture with Scripture”. Then we naturally come to the conclusion that it is indeed so. Personally I find the great wonder of the Bible that it always fits. Sometimes we do not read it rightly, but then we have other Scripture passages that correct that again. And so we keep dealing with it. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” should really have been: “the whole scripture is God-breathed”, for that is what it stands. In Greek it is one word “Theopneustos”. God and Spirit are named in one go. “Theos” is “God” and “pneuma” is “Spirit”. It is brought forth by the Spirit of God. That unfortunately falls away in translation, for “given by inspiration” is just a bit too weak. “Inspired by God” seems to me also good English. As a whole that Scripture is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”. I usually summarise it with one word: “instruction”.

The word “reproof” may perhaps give the impression that something must be refuted. As though you can use the Bible to argue and to refute something. But that is not the meaning of the word. In English it stands “reprove”, that is “prove again”. Anew, repeatedly. That is what it actually means, for “doctrine, correction, instruction” means that things are repeated again and again, that things are argued anew. Preferably in a different way, but it always comes to the same. That is one of the principles of good instruction. That happens when one compares prophecy with prophecy. Then one repeatedly comes upon the same truths.

That Word of God should, was the intention, change us in our thinking, our inward man, our mind, our consciousness, our heart, our spirit, and the like. Gradually in practice that consciousness changes, because we learn, that is at least the intention. Where we are instructed from God’s side is that we should first come to know Him, for where we come to know His Word, we come to know Him. Just as He is the Truth, so His Word is

the Truth. And the more we understand of it, the better our view will be of the circumstances around us. For the Truth stands firm.

The profit of the Bible, the profit of the Word of God given to us, is that it “makes perfect”. It causes us to grow up and thereby makes us capable “unto every good work”. But in the first place it concerns the change of the inward man, as Paul argues in

Romans 12:2:

“...be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”.

Our mind can only be changed by experience. By what we have learned from that Word of God. Thereby we learn to see things in their right proportions, and to that end that Scripture, the Word of God, has been given us.

The whole Scripture is for instruction “in righteousness”. In other words, we are instructed in righteousness. It will be clear that righteousness and truth do not exist in this world. You do not need to be a great philosopher to realise that. If we are instructed “in righteousness”, we are instructed in knowledge of God and thereby also in knowledge of His will; how He carries it out. Righteousness is not an abstract concept; it has directly to do with practical life. That would be righteous. The question is: who is the righteousness? To ask the question is to answer the question. We are instructed “in the righteousness of God”. Then someone said, then we are therefore instructed in the Law of God, whereupon the Law is taught us and especially how we should keep it. But that is wrong, for according to the right of God we are precisely not to submit ourselves to any law. We would not live under that, for according to that same Law, and according to that same right of God, we are precisely delivered from it. We make ourselves “a transgressor of the Law” when we only have the idea that we should place ourselves under the Law, according to the apostle Paul in:

Galatians 2:16-21

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

This is Paul’s answer to the question whether the believer should live under the law or not. According to the right of God we are condemned and executed by the law. In God’s Law it is arranged that the head of the family has the right to pay the debts of the family. That the Lord Jesus as Head of the human family has done.

He is the “Redeemer”, the “Goel”. He died for that family, man, but that therefore means that one died for all.

2 Corinthians 5:15:

“...if one died for all, then were all dead...” So we are all dead and therefore not under the law.

By the death of that One the demand of God's Law has been fulfilled. Our salvation is based on that, and then you cannot afterwards preach the Law again. Then you make yourself a transgressor of that same Law. That is therefore impossible.

From Scripture we learn to understand, some quickly, some astonishingly slowly, what the Lord requires of us. Then we should experience that in the practice of our life. "Prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2). Then we act accordingly and thus spend our "gifts", as is told very systematically in Romans 12. It is in any case "the power of God" whereby we are changed in our thinking and whereby we are "thoroughly furnished unto all good works". That is "walking in the good works, which God hath before ordained".

Galatians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

It concerns good works in accordance with His will, for His will has determined those good works beforehand. That is therefore the Christian manner of life. Christ Jesus Himself walks in those good works. In 2 Timothy 3 it is expressed in slightly different words: we should be instructed by Scripture in the righteousness of God so as to be equipped for the service of God. 2 Corinthians 3:4-6

And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

God, Christ, has made us able to be ministers of the New Covenant and thus not under the Old Covenant. It means that we submit to the present work of Christ. For that we must undergo a change of mind, because we are naturally inclined to handle human standards, human thoughts, regarding our conduct.

A Christian is someone who is in Christ and who has therefore received that divine life. Someone who is redeemed from that old creation. Who belongs to a believing remnant, made superfluous in the world. From that we have been withdrawn; we have been placed outside it. And there we should also live, and that according to entirely different standards from the world and the Law, for that falls into the category of "rudiments of the world". We live according to "the first principles of Christ" and even according to what follows.

Verse 17: "Thoroughly furnished unto all good works". That word "thoroughly" is not in the sense of mature, as it occurs elsewhere. It is the word *exartizō* and that is also stated afterwards; it means that one should be "furnished". In the sense that one should be provided with all that is necessary. Fully equipped therefore. Here already, but undoubtedly also in connection with eternity, for we are after all prepared for that. Our whole life as children of God here is nothing other than a kind of upbringing, training, preparation for eternity. Therefore we remain learning all our life long and are instructed in the Scriptures, in the work of God, but thereby in the Being of that God whom we serve.

Thereby we arrive again, at the end of this relatively short epistle, at the fact that as a servant of God one should be faithful to the Lord and thereby faithful to His Word. One should be steadfast in the faith. That is really the theme of the whole epistle.

2 Timothy 4:1-2

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

It is the intention that we, when we have found the unchangeable Truth and the unchangeable God, should preach this Word. Timothy is impressed upon his heart: “Preach the word”. That is that Word, the gospel, “whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles” in chapter 1:11. Here Paul says it again, and not for the first time, to Timothy.

“Be instant”. That is: “hold fast”. One should hold fast to that Word, continue in it “in season, out of season”, whether it is convenient or inconvenient. Especially for the speaker. It is said here to the preacher, the speaker. Then “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”. Two verses earlier that was “doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction”. That is not so much what the preacher does, but primarily what the Word of God itself does. “Reprove”, “do it again”. “Rebuke”, “exhort with all longsuffering and all doctrine”. It implies that one should be long-suffering. The “doctrine” is after all also long-suffering, for it always remains the same. Nothing changes in that and therefore nothing should ever change in that long-suffering. Those are precisely the characteristics of the Word of God. It endures, is always applicable, remains always relevant, because it does not “go with the times”.

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ” means that Paul says these things on behalf of God, or on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ, for they are not two. That means again that it is not Paul, but God Himself, namely the Lord Jesus Christ, who says: “preach the word”. Though it comes through the words of Paul to Timothy, through these words Timothy should be convinced that it comes from the Lord Himself.

“Who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom”. Timothy too, to whom these things are written, will be judged from God’s side. And that he should therefore, just like Paul himself, be faithful to the charge of the following verse: speaking the “sound doctrine”. You will have to give account for it later. If it is your ministry, your career, then you simply have to do it. Then take into account the future in which you will be rewarded for it. That also applies to every believer and that is the encouragement, the positive side of the story. The negative side is that one “may lose reward”.

“At his appearing and his kingdom” means “in the revelation of his kingdom” and that is His return.

2 Timothy 4:3

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

This connects with

1 Timothy 4:1:

“The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith”.

And also with 2 Timothy 3:1: “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come”. Here it is called “the time will come”. Since these things are said to Timothy, it means that that “time” already began in Timothy’s days. In fact it has therefore always

been so, whereby one can conclude that it would only become worse. I think that too, that it would become worse and also that the changes, the departures, go faster. Nowadays everyone talks over each other, everything is open to discussion and everyone has his own views. It is one big chaos.

“The sound doctrine” is the fixed expression from 1 and 2 Timothy and also from Titus 1:9. Therefore people are so unhealthy, especially spiritually. Because they feed themselves with things that are not nourishing at all. In any case they will not endure that sound doctrine, but they will be “having itching ears”. Therefore “they shall heap to themselves teachers”. The apostle Peter speaks of “false teachers”.

2 Peter 2:1-2

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

That “damnable heresies” is opposed to “sound doctrine”. A deviating teaching is by definition damnable, namely perishable, it does not endure. They shall bring them in privily. “Cunningly” it is called in

Ephesians 4:14:

“...by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive”.

That means it happens consciously. It is however not sincere, as appears from “privily shall bring in”. To what end that is, stands in verse 3.

2 Peter 2:3a

And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you...

“Feigned words” is “fair speech”. That is also used with the “fables” from verse 4. With rhetoric they will “make merchandise of you”. A business, a trade, a concern. One of the largest internationals in the world is the Roman Catholic Church and there are still quite a few more. Throughout history it has got out of hand. But there have always been believers who have withdrawn from it. Also in this time it is all organised again. If it is not through church institutions, then it can also be through other institutions, societies, associations, and foundations.

I hope you do not get angry, but in general it is yet so that an official Christian preacher “is gathered” by the people as such. That is not clever. The man is electable, callable, or he applies. Then he must appear before the committee and is judged and hired or not. By whom? By the Lord? No. By people. It can indeed be different, but it never happens differently. There is almost always an employment relationship, whereby the man must indeed preach to the people, for he is in their service, what they like to hear and above all not preach what they do not want to hear. Those must therefore speak according to “their own lusts” of those who appointed him; that is how it works.

2 Timothy 4:4

And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

If one turns away from the truth, then only lies remain. Discussions, also in our day, are discussions about the different lies and to what extent the different lies yet have so

much in common. For example that of “Christianity”, of Judaism and Islam. But it has nothing to do with the truth, because one cannot argue about the truth. My Bible does not say: go under all nations to argue and also not: exchange thoughts. It simply stands: proclaim, for one cannot argue about the Word of God.

2 Timothy 4:5

But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

“But thou”, just like: “ye have not so learned Christ” (Ephesians 4:20). That “thou” are the exception to those who have turned away from the truth. That “thou” does not belong in the darkness, but “without the camp”. “Watch thou in all things”, vigilant therefore. Be conscious of what you are busy with, of your circumstances, but especially of what you have to say. As a logical consequence: endure afflictions. Those come from those who “will not endure sound doctrine”. But: just continue, “do the work of an evangelist”. Logical, for the Word of God is glad tidings.

2 Timothy 4:6

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. “Offered” means “poured out”. (See Philippians 2:17) On the basis of “the time of my departure is at hand” people say: that must then have been written in Paul’s second imprisonment. For here he evidently does not expect to be released. That does not appear to be correct, because he does indeed expect to be released. As appears from verse 13, but we come to that later.

2 Timothy 4:7-8

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

These verses are of great importance, because they give a retrospect on the history of the apostle Paul and on his career. He says: “I have fought a good fight” and it is repeated with other words: “I have finished my course”, and then “I have kept the faith”. In the first epistle to Timothy the Apostle already made clear that it concerns “the good fight of faith”.

1 Timothy 6:12

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

The “good fight” means that one has difficulty, or that difficulty is done to one, to live in faith or from faith. If one fights this good fight, then one lays hold on other life than what one has naturally received. To that eternal life one is called. That costs effort, for on the one hand you must let go of the temporal, the perishable life and on the other hand you must lay hold on this eternal life.

John 12:25

He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

These are words of the Lord Jesus. That eternal life someone receives if he has “striven lawfully”. In 2 Timothy 2:5 Paul points to the rules of this fight, as in a sports contest:

“And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully”. He also speaks in Philippians 1 about that fight.

Philippians 1:27-30

Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

It concerns a “striving together for the faith of the gospel”, faith in the Word of God, faith in the gospel, the glad tidings. Holding fast to that Word, that is the fight. In practice the believer is every time again expected to choose for faith in the glad tidings, which says that man is not justified by works of the law, but by faith. It is every time again choosing for faith in the Word and thereby in the Lord Jesus Christ. That means that there will inevitably be opposition in that fight, but we should not let ourselves be “terrified” by that. For those adversaries it is “an evident token of perdition”, but “to you of salvation, and that of God”. So that here this opposition is even positively explained toward us. It is something for which we can be thankful if that opposition is there. Then it indeed means that we stand on the right side. Opposition usually comes from those who themselves stand on the wrong side, who themselves live under the wrong yoke and who want to have us under it too.

If one believes in Him and lives by faith, one will as a result also suffer for Him, verse 29 says, whereby the conclusion is that this specific suffering is “given in the behalf of Christ”. Thereby “having the same conflict” which they saw in Paul and now hear, because Paul writes this to them. It is that same fight that Paul later speaks of in 2 Timothy 4. Paul has as a result of fighting “the good fight” absolutely suffered affliction.

1 Thessalonians 2:2

But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

Even before Paul came to Thessalonica, he had already suffered much, and the preaching of the faith had already been widely opposed. But that did not stop him from nevertheless preaching this glad message of life by faith to the believers in Thessalonica. He would persevere in that fight and remain faithful in it. Something similar is also written in Hebrews 10, where believers are called to come boldly to the throne of grace.

Hebrews 10:32

But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

Hebrews 10:33 -35

Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock (spectacle) both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. The Apostle points back to the history of these Hebrews, that they “endured a great fight of afflictions”. He then calls these Hebrews to continue doing that, to continue walking in the light they once received, despite the fight and despite the suffering that is the consequence of it.

Hebrews 12:1-3

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

“With patience” means that one suffers, and even for a long time. The word “race” in the original text is the word for “the fight”, but you cannot translate it that way here.

“Contest”, as in 2 Timothy 4, would work. It is exactly the same word “agōn”. The fight is not only presented as war, but also as a contest and thus as a race. Where it is immediately said that we should look “unto Jesus the author”. He ran ahead. He finished that race, this fight. Therefore He is called “the finisher of our faith”. That “race” is a life by faith. We should then “consider” that the Lord Jesus “endured such contradiction of sinners against himself”. That suffering was the mark of the Lord Jesus’ life. Not only at the cross, for that is not even what it is about here, but about His manner of life. It concerns the practical opposition He experienced from those who opposed, namely all those religious people around Him. The opposition did not come from “harlots and publicans”, but from the religious people and that determined His fight. They were the ones who finally crucified Him.

1 Corinthians 9:24-26

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

That does not mean that as far as believers are concerned there is only one who receives this prize, for that does not stand there. It concerns the example, that in the fight it is normal that only one receives the prize and he says: “so run, that ye may obtain”. So you must simply do your best to hold on and know what you are busy with, namely with “the prize”, the “incorruptible crown”. In verse 26 the Apostle repeats it and says: “so fight I”. “Not as one that beateth the air”, whereby he again says that it is a race, a fight, a contest he is busy with.

Philippians 3:14

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. “The mark” is “the goal”. “Mark” is a corruption of the word “goal”. You cannot hit a black target. A target should preferably be white, otherwise you cannot aim well at it. “Goal” could also have stood there, but it explicitly stands “mark”, because white is the colour of heavenly things. White stands for justification; white garments and so forth, and thus I press toward the mark. It is the goal, but it is at the same time “white”, the righteousness of God by faith. Paul forgets “the things which are behind” and reaches

forth to “the things which are before”. He “presses toward the mark”, because he would receive a prize. The prize of honour namely, the reward “for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”. That is the “heavenly calling” (Hebrews 3:1. Every believer is called to that, and to what is a believer called? To sonship. Called to be “conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29. That is described in 2 Timothy 4:8 as: “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness”. That “crown”, a symbolic image of glory, majesty, and dominion, the believer receives on “righteous ground”, because he has done what he had to do, namely run the race, or fight the fight, in accordance with what is right. For those who share in His humiliation and in His suffering, who “have endured the great fight of afflictions”, just like Christ, this applies:

Romans 8:18

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

The suffering of this present time, as a result of “the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12, does not outweigh the crown we shall receive. The cross we bear does not outweigh the crown we shall receive. We receive an “incorruptible crown”, for we receive it not in a perishable but in an imperishable world. Not in a corruptible but in an incorruptible kingdom.

James 1:12

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

It concerns an incorruptible crown, which belongs in Eternal Life, the life under the New Covenant. It is a “living crown”; a crown that has to do with the resurrection of Christ, with the New Life namely. The Lord has promised that to “them that love him”. Or, as 2 Timothy 4:8 puts it: “unto all them also that love his appearing”. In practice this means that that crown is given to those who live in fellowship with Him and who therefore have fellowship in “the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Philippians 3:10. It concerns a practical union with Christ. In

2 Timothy 4:8 the word “appearing” points to the return of Christ. The word means His “manifestation”. If we live by faith, then it means that we wait for the things we do not now see, but yet expect with patience. We wait for what is promised and look forward to His return, that is, to His “appearing”. That is living by faith.

1 Peter 1:4

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

1 Peter 5:4

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

The “inheritance” consists of “glory”, Peter says. In practice that is the Kingship of Christ. That is the “crowning”, an acknowledgement, of the work that has been done. A crown, in that expression, is therefore the result of something. One cannot earn a crown, but at a certain moment one is deemed worthy to wear that crown.

Revelation 2:10

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Just as in James 1:12 it concerns a crown one receives, together with eternal life, and thus in eternity.

Revelation 3:11

Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

A believer must hold what he has, “that no man take thy crown”, for being faithful in the service of the Lord is crowned with this crown. The principle is that one receives a crown on condition that one faithfully runs. That crown therefore lies ready, but if you are disqualified along the way, you do not get it. Thus “hold that fast which thou hast”.

Revelation 4:4

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

This group of 24 elders is a picture of the church. Those “crowns of gold on their heads” is a depiction of the church of the firstborn. These are therefore 24 firstfruits. Gold is a picture of eternal life, of incorruptible things, of the righteousness of God, of imperishable things.

Revelation 10:11 -12

And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

When we receive crowns, it is not because of us, but because the Lord Himself has been faithful in His work in us. That is symbolically depicted here in “they cast their crowns before the throne”.

Revelation 14:14

And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

This is the depiction of Christ Himself, who has Himself been faithful, lived by faith here on earth and therefore also suffered, but was glorified and thus will wear this “golden crown”. 1 Thessalonians 2:19

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? A crown brings “rejoicing” with it. The apostle Paul says here in effect: what you now withhold from me here, I shall receive extra above and therefore I glory in that I have had to take nothing from you. You have after all given me nothing at all, but that turns out well. Then I still have that credit, then I get that “above”.

2 Timothy 4:9-12

Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.

Evidently there was still close contact between the believers among themselves. It is remarkable that in quite a number of epistles at the end greetings are conveyed from these to those and vice versa. Sometimes it appears that some who are named by name are suddenly in another dwelling place. We do not then know who they are, but yet that

there was lively contact between the believers in the different places, which were really considerable distances apart. We do not have to do with isolated local churches, but with the “una sancta”. That is an official term for “the one holy catholic church”, and that is the only one we encounter in the Bible. “The one holy church” means it literally. It is also remarkable that the apostle Paul in the last chapter of the epistle to the Romans sends greetings to so many. More than 30 names are mentioned there in Romans 16. They were therefore known and that is entirely remarkable, because it is a letter from Paul to the believers in Rome, while he himself confirms in that letter that he had never yet been in Rome (Romans 1:13; 15:22-23. He would come there only “in bonds”, in his imprisonment. Those to whom Paul sends greetings either had correspondence or are people who travelled from other places where Paul had been to Rome, and evidently also ministered the Word there.

There were no isolated local churches with a strict separation, a strict isolation, and a strict government. There was free exchange and free traffic between the various local communities among themselves. Mutual boundaries did not exist at all. It means that this should really be so today too. Free mutual contact between believers from different places, for “local churches” exist only in our thoughts. Naturally there are places in the Bible where churches come together. People come from the surroundings to such a central point, but that does not mean that such a community then also forms a separate denomination or a separate church or anything like that. The Bible knows nothing of that.

“Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me” is therefore possible. Paul is in prison in Rome and writes this letter to Timothy, with the request to come to him as soon as possible. Paul simply says to Timothy, do this and do that, and Timothy does it too. Not on the basis of some official church order, but because of the cooperative relationship that has thus grown. Paul does not say: pray for it, but simply “do thy diligence to come shortly unto me”. For Timothy it was evidently no problem at all to meet Paul’s wish. The reason for that stands in verse 10: “for Demas hath forsaken me”, so that Timothy might perhaps have to replace Demas in one way or another. But in any case it is so that Paul complains that he is almost completely alone. There is only one with him, verse 11 says. That is strange, for you would expect that there would be more believers in Rome who visit Paul. But Paul was primarily visited by others who, like him, were elders. Who, like him, bore responsibility in the community among the Christians. It stands to reason that others continue his task while he is in prison and that those others then maintain contact with him. Demas must have been one of them.

Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me:

For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

Demas has become world-famous for “forsaking Paul”, for that is the only way we know him. As the one who was with Paul, but ultimately no longer. Demas first served the apostle Paul and then disappeared. He was first faithful and then unfaithful. With John Mark the case is exactly the opposite. He was first unfaithful and then faithful again. Both things occur in the Bible.

We meet him only a few times in the Bible. In Colossians 4:14, together with Luke. Paul also writes this epistle to the Colossians from prison. In Philemon verses 23 and 24 he is also mentioned by Paul: “There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus, Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.” They are indeed fellow-

labourers of Paul. When in 2 Timothy 4 greetings are also sent from prison, it appears that Luke is still there, but Demas no longer. Nor the others, by the way, but of Demas it is said that he has forsaken Paul. The reason for that is also mentioned: “having loved this present world”. It stands “the present aion”, the “present age”, we would say. Demas has forsaken Paul and travelled to Thessalonica, so that Paul will no doubt have been concerned about the Thessalonians. Two epistles were written by Paul to the believers in Thessalonica. Those concern the sanctification of the believers: “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thessalonians 4:3. About their spiritual growth and development therefore. The end result of that is “the rapture of the church”, whereby all believers of the church are changed and go to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17. In chapter 4 it is said that the believer in our dispensation has not an earthly but a heavenly destiny. If Demas, who has loved “this present aion”, this present age, this old world and the way of things in this old world, has travelled to Thessalonica, then you see the problems arise. For Paul has just pointed out to those Thessalonians that it is not at all about “this age” down here, but about “the coming age” above. Then the question is: what is Demas going to do in Thessalonica? Bring those people back to here and now? Try to make the believers there also love “this present aion” again? Do you understand what is happening here? Paul is in prison, there are people with him who are instructed by him. They should continue from him with the preaching of the Word, like Timothy. They should continue to “fight the good fight”. Among them is Demas, but he no longer sees it at all; he has become unfaithful. He has switched to “this world”.

The name “Demas” we find back in “democracy”. That has to do with the people (in French: “le peuple”) and therefore it is translated as “popular”. A “popular man” is actually what his name means. “Popular” namely means “loved by the people”. For a Christian, however, it is no recommendation if he is loved by the people. No, he should be loved by the Lord. This Demas was therefore popular according to his name and also directed to the people. He was perhaps also concerned for the people and will undoubtedly have had the best intentions with all those people. But the trouble is that he had come to love “this present aion”. Thus he travelled away and left Paul alone. He must have been very concerned about what the result would be there among the Thessalonians, who had just been pointed by him to their heavenly calling and destiny. Paul himself remained in his own hired house in Rome, where he was not allowed out. “Only Luke is with me”, he writes, “his physician, a brother”. You can imagine that, for it seems to me not positive for Paul’s health that this situation occurred and that people left him. Paul must have felt very powerless. He already stood powerless before the Corinthians while he was still free to go and stand where he wanted. Here he sits powerless in his prison in Rome, knowing that others have set out to draw those believers away from Christ again. That is what it comes down to. That was certainly not to bring them to unbelief, but to “little faith”. Especially keeping that faith small was the intention. That is what the Bible calls it: “men of little faith” (among others Matthew 8:26. There is therefore certainly a pitiable situation. Not only Demas had travelled away; there were still more who for one reason or another had left. In any case it stands that “Crescens to Galatia”. We meet Crescens only here. His name means that he was “growing”, that he was becoming ever greater. We know that from music as “crescendo”. It went crescendo for him, growing, swelling, but when things are swelling in the Bible, it is not good. Then they puff up and when they are puffed up, they burst of themselves at

some point and then they prove to be hollow. That is the working of leaven. Crescens also had to grow and become great and therefore disappeared too. The meaning of his name corresponds to that of Demas. It had to become popular, it had to be generally accepted. Therefore he left Paul. That is always how it goes. Paul is the first, or the first, as far as his teaching is concerned, that one lets go. It has been said to me: "You too always with Paul..."

Titus was more or less Paul's closest fellow-worker, together with Timothy. But Titus had also travelled away, to Dalmatia. Titus is a rather remarkable figure, because we do not meet him in Acts, although there is an epistle written to him. The explanation for that is that probably a large part of Acts is derived from Titus and thus more or less written by Titus. That need not be literal, but it can of course have been recorded from the mouth of Titus by Luke, who officially wrote part of Acts. We know that Luke was not present at all the things he described. Probably the other part is from Titus. That is the thought and that would explain why his name is not mentioned at all.

Of Titus we know that he visited many places. By Paul he was left behind in various places. The last we know of him is what stands here. He travelled to Dalmatia. How that turned out, we do not know. Dalmatia is the same as Illyricum and that is the same as Albania. It borders Yugoslavia and Greece. What became of Titus's ministry there, I do not know.

Luke is then still the only bright spot in Paul's life. His name therefore means "light"; it comes from "Lucius". The writer therefore of the gospel of Luke and also of Acts. And we just read about him in Colossians 4:14. Where indeed it stands that he was "the beloved physician". He was the doctor with Paul.

There is difference of opinion about that and that is always as soon as the name Galatia is mentioned. "Galatia" can namely also be "Gaul". That is considered not so likely, but it is always mentioned. Galatia would namely be part of present-day Turkey. What we call Asia Minor. But it could also be Gaul. It is in any case the same name and that is because the original population of Galatia ended up in Gaul (that is France). There is a demonstrable connection between them. One therefore does not know exactly where it is and I do not either.

Then we still have Mark in verse 11: "Take Mark, and bring him with thee". So Paul calls on Timothy to come to him, because only Luke is still with him, but he must also take Mark with him. Mark was actually called John, but to distinguish him from others who were called John it was fully John Mark. Acts 12:12: "John, whose surname was Mark". He is the writer of the gospel of Mark and then you immediately understand why he is called Mark instead of John. Otherwise we would have two gospels of John.

Paul and Barnabas took this John Mark with them on their missionary journey. And then it stands "John departing from them returned to Jerusalem" (Acts 13:13. That was in Perga, a city in Pamphylia. This John is John Mark. He does not go further with Paul and Barnabas. He thus actually leaves them in the lurch and that is later referred to again in Acts 15. Paul and Barnabas wanted to visit "the brethren in every city in which we have preached the word of the Lord" to see "how they do" (Acts 15:36. Barnabas proposed to take "John, whose surname was Mark", with them. They had to introduce people into this work after all, to be able to take it over later. "But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work" (verse 38. Paul said therefore: there is no question of that, for he left us in the lurch last time. I am not taking him any more. Paul also stuck to it. "And the contention

was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus” (verse 39. Paul has no confidence in John Mark on the basis of the experience in Perga. That boy is not reliable enough; I am not starting that again, Paul says in effect.

From Colossians 4:10 we know that Mark was the cousin of Barnabas and that perhaps explains why Barnabas against Paul’s will still wanted to take him along once more. Paul saw through that and did not fall for it. The consequence was that Paul and Barnabas each went a different way. Paul set the work of the Lord higher than these family ties and chose another, and that was Silas (verse 40. From Colossians 4 it also appears that Mark was indeed with Paul later. That is also confirmed in the epistle to Philemon and here in 2 Timothy 4:11. The relationship between Paul and John Mark proves to have been restored after all. Evidently John Mark was able to prove his faithfulness as a servant after all, for that must have been the reason for the restoration of the relationship between Paul and John Mark. And therefore he says to Timothy: “take Mark, and bring him with thee”. And even: “for he is profitable to me for the ministry”. Which also appears naturally from the gospel of Mark that then comes from his hand.

There is therefore a whole story behind it. You learn from it that someone would first go along, serve along, run the race, or fight the fight. Along the way he cannot keep it up, or he no longer sees it. In any case he proves unreliable. On the second occasion he gets another chance, which he does make good. That can therefore happen. We also find Mark in the company of Peter.

1 Peter 5:13

The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.

The translators hasten to say that it concerns the church in connection with “elected together with you”. That is not in Babylon, the well-known city, but it is Babylon, a Jewish community in Egypt. That existed then. So we meet Mark in the Bible as the companion of Paul, the companion of Barnabas, and as the companion of Peter. He had a serving task, in which he especially had to be faithful.

Verse 12: “And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.” That also appears from Ephesians 6:21-22: “But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.” Tychicus was sent to Ephesus, probably to deliver the epistle to the Ephesians and to tell how it is with Paul.

2 Timothy 4:13

The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.

Paul does indeed expect to be released. The cloak he can only need if he has to travel. Paul planned to undertake more journeys and therefore his words in verse 6: “the time of my departure is at hand” do not refer to his death as a martyr, but to the release from prison in Rome.

From profane history there are still some other stories about Paul. They say not only that Paul was released from prison and went on missionary journeys, but those missionary journeys are even described rather extensively. There are even museums dedicated to Paul’s stay in certain places. For example in England. That great church in London is not

called St Paul's Cathedral for nothing, for Paul is supposed to have indeed been there and preached. Paul had contact in Rome with the then British royal family. Because of that contact he would, via Spain, whither he already wanted to travel (Romans 15:24, have travelled to England. From Rome he travelled to Spain. He crossed the mainland and went by ship to England. The places are still pointed out where he "landed" and where he worked. As well as the remains of the first Christian communities. That does not all stand in the Bible, so you must take it with a grain of salt if necessary, but the story must come from somewhere. That Paul died a martyr's death we do not find in the Bible. There are other stories that Paul died only at a very advanced age of old age and before that time still made various missionary journeys in Europe and particularly to England.

Philippians 1:25-26

And this I confidently know, that I shall remain and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

Philippians 2:17

Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

"Offered upon the sacrifice" is the same term as used in 2 Timothy 4:6: "I am now ready to be offered". That "offered" means "poured out". Paul looks forward to that and therefore says: "I joy, and rejoice with you all". It is therefore spoken, also in Philippians 1:25 and 26, of the reunion of the Philippians and Paul. And in 2:24 he says outright: "But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly." It stands several times in Philippians that Paul will be released from this imprisonment. It stands to reason that in 2 Timothy 4:6 exactly the same circumstances are in force.

Philemon 22

But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.

Paul asks in this epistle to arrange lodging for him. Paul hopes to go to Colossae, for Philemon, to whom he writes this, lived in Colossae. It seems clear to me that Paul expected to be released from his prison.

2 Timothy 4:13

The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.

Paul had evidently left the cloak he asked for hanging with Carpus in Troas, where the Apostle had spent several months. Here he asks Timothy to pick it up along the way. He also asks to bring "the books, but especially the parchments", which evidently were also with Carpus in Troas. I think he had a room there during the time he was in Troas and left part of his possessions there. He appears to need those books, for from the Bible we get the impression that he was released from that imprisonment and that the man was still full of enterprise.

The books are scrolls. Here you see that someone who under God's inspiration brings forth the Word of God still needs books. The apostle Paul may be an apostle and prophet, but his prophetic ministry consists in God Himself revealing to him how the Scriptures, and particularly the prophecies, are to be explained. God does not speak

directly through Paul, as He did formerly through the prophets of the Old Testament. The Lord leads Paul in the explanation of those Old Testament prophets.

Colossians 1:24-25

Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

This “filling up the word of God” does not mean that he adds anything to the Word of God, but that the existing Word of God should ultimately be completely filled up. In short, through the apostle Paul it is made known that the prophecies concerning Israel and the nations also have an application to the church in our dispensation. That is Paul’s prophetic work.

Paul could certainly make good use of all the Bible commentaries of that time. By human standards, and even outside the Bible, he was a learned man. As far as the Bible itself is concerned, he was “as touching the law, a Pharisee” (Philippians 3:5, and those learned a great deal about the Scriptures. He could certainly use that knowledge to explain the Scriptures. So he does not say: it is only about the Spirit and the Lord must reveal it to me. No, but “those books must come along”.

“But especially the parchments” means they had preference, in case they could not take everything. “The parchments” does not primarily say anything about the content of the books, but about the age of the books. Parchments were used to make books in ancient times. Later came scrolls. Paul therefore had a preference for these older books. I understand that very well, for I too have a preference for older books, for the simple reason that there is much more in them. The older it is, the more people still knew of the Scriptures. The newer the books are, the less valuable they are. What also comes in is that people usually just copy everything from one another. Then you get a long bibliography at the back of the new book. You are better off reading the original books from which they quote, to see whether that was done well or not. Then you not only read what those people wrote long ago, but also in what context it was.

2 Timothy 4:14-15

Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.

“Alexander the coppersmith” is probably the same as in 1 Timothy 1:20, where Alexander is named. Paul no longer wanted anything to do with him. “Whom I have delivered unto Satan”, it stands there. Alexander belonged namely to those who “concerning faith have made shipwreck” (verse 19). One was “without rudder”, for that is the meaning of the term. One lets go of the faith and is therefore without rudder. For by faith one is steered toward the things one hopes for and the things one does not yet see (Hebrews 11:1).

Alexander appears to be a coppersmith. That does not surprise us, for copper is connected with atonement and a coppersmith is someone who “works” the atonement. He does something with it, he forges it into something else. Someone who works copper therefore actually works the atonement. He makes something else of it. That is what it comes down to. The connection lies in the word “copper”, which is the same as the Hebrew “kafar”, namely “atonement”. A coppersmith is someone who tampers with atonement. Who changes the doctrine of atonement.

Alexander had “made shipwreck concerning faith”, and that while one is reconciled only by faith. “Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works”. Paul was certainly not out for that reward; that is the Lord’s own work. The intention is also not that Timothy should take revenge, but that he should beware of Alexander the coppersmith. And also beware of other “coppersmiths”. “For he hath greatly withstood our words”. He was therefore an opponent of what Paul and his companions preached. Faith means in practice submission. One submits oneself, if one believes, to Christ, who has taken on the responsibility and leadership. Alexander, however, leads “shipwreck” of this faith and that corresponds to the meaning of his name, for it is understood as a “hater of men”. And thus as a “hater of authority”.

2 Timothy 4:16

At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

It appears that Paul had already been heard once by “justice”, for he was after all in a kind of pre-trial detention. He had evidently not yet been before the emperor, but he had already been heard here and then there was no one with him. They all forsook him; there was no one to support him in applying the Scriptures before those who made him give account. Then you can well use the support of others who say and teach the same things. But so it went and that this was judged negatively appears from what he says: “I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge”. That could therefore be the case, for they failed. Where Paul once needed support, they left him alone. Paul has just the same sort of position as the Lord. When it came to it, He was alone. Exactly the same story.

2 Timothy 4:17

Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

Paul gave official account here to the emperor and to Rome and thereby to the highest representative of all the Gentiles. In fact Paul thus explains his preaching to all the Gentiles, and that at an official proceeding, which was also the intention. That is why he was in Rome.

“And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion” means that he yet got through that first account. At that first occasion, to determine whether it could really be brought before the emperor, he was not simply condemned. Later he will yet have to appear officially before the emperor himself, but here he has got through. I think that lion is ultimately Satan himself.

2 Timothy 4:18

And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

With the emphasis on “every”, for this circumstance he had endured, but more of that could be expected if he were free. And then it stands: “and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom”. That is a splendid statement, because Paul does not speak so often about “his kingdom”. I too grew up with the thought that we do not form part of His kingdom, but belong to the church in heaven. His kingdom comes only in the future on

earth. Later it appeared that that was not entirely true and that we do indeed form part of His kingdom, but then of a hidden kingdom. It is just which terms you agree to use among yourselves. We belong to the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of Christ, but then not the earthly but the heavenly.

That the Lord would “preserve” Paul “unto his heavenly kingdom” connects again with verse 8.

2 Timothy 4:8a

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day:

“The Lord, the righteous judge”, a different judge from the emperor in Rome, will give him “a crown of righteousness”. “To whom be glory for ever and ever”, verse 18. The Lord is the Only One to whom glory belongs. Everywhere and always, for that is the meaning of “for ever and ever”. That is really the end of the epistle. For after that only greetings are really given.

2 Timothy 4:19

Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.

First to Prisca, Priscilla in full, and Aquila, the husband. We know them from biblical history. We meet them when they live in Rome with a church that meets at their home, or at any rate under their responsibility. From Rome they end up in Corinth and there too they have a church at home. Then we find them in Ephesus, for they receive greetings in the epistle written to Timothy in Ephesus - 1 Timothy 1:3. They always provide housing for the church.

It is very peculiar how those names fit together, for “Prisca” means something like “an early one”. Someone who is rather early. That applies to the church, for it has even received the right of the firstborn. It is a “church of firstfruits”. “Aquila” is an “eagle” and that is the king of heaven. So we have here to do with “an early eagle”, a picture of the church, with its heavenly citizenship and heavenly birthright.

“The household of Onesiphorus” is at any rate the church that meets with him in or at home. But probably also his family. We have already discussed that in connection with 2 Timothy 1:16-18.

2 Timothy 4:20

Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.

“Erastus” means that he was beloved, Erastus, “the beloved”. We do not know exactly who he is. The name itself occurs in two places in the Bible, in Acts 19:22, and another Erastus in Romans 16:23. I think it was the chamberlain of the city. This one is perhaps one of those two, but perhaps it is again another. We know nothing about that. But he must be regarded as a fellow-worker of Paul, who was also known in Ephesus.

“Erastus abode at Corinth” and Trophimus was also left somewhere, namely in Miletus. “Trophimus” means “nourishing”. He therefore dispensed food. As a servant and preacher of the message of the Word of God that will certainly be so. We meet him only in Acts 20:4 and 21:29. I cannot say more about it.

Miletus lies 50 kilometres below Ephesus, on the west coast of Asia Minor. That Trophimus was left sick (“sick”) means therefore that Paul was not from the Pentecostal church. He does not even say: pray for him. Nothing at all. Not even: the Lord must care for him. For ultimately that is how the very last verse ends: “The Lord Jesus Christ be

with thy spirit". He makes no problem at all about that sick body of Trophimus. It can happen that the body is not in order. That will be so then. The Lord knows about it and He must see to it.

2 Timothy 4:21

Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren.

Here it is repeated that Timothy must come quickly to Paul. Just as in verse 9: "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me". In verse 21 it still stands: please before winter. "Eubulus" is pronounced just like Zeus, so Zuis and Eubulus. "Eubulus" means that "he has good plans". That will be so and I know no more about it to tell. We do not know him either. "Pudens" means that he was "modest". It yet appears that these people are with Paul in some way. He does say "all men forsook me" and "only Luke is with me", but these people are there too. Evidently they stand a bit further from Paul. A kind of "second line". He has less use for them. But there is one who has good plans and the other is modest.

"Linus" means "of linen". Linen, or "linen cloth", is always a picture of resurrection and of righteousness. So someone who is of linen is a picture of righteousness.

"Claudia" means that she is "obedient". So all good qualities of believers are named. Having good plans, being modest, being righteous, and being obedient. All positive characteristics of believers.

"And all the brethren". There are therefore still more. That is the "third line" I suppose. There are indeed more believers, but in practice Paul has not much use for them. They do however send greetings to Timothy.

2 Timothy 4:22

The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

It is peculiar how the Apostle concludes these epistles. It is remarkable that no more is spoken about earthly circumstances. About "flesh", let alone about law. But it is with "thy spirit". It concerns spiritual things. It concerns the New Man, for that must go well. And then: "Grace be with you", for those two things belong together. Living by grace is the life of the Spirit. It is the life of the New Man. Those are the things that are really important. All the rest is subordinate to that.

In other words: when a believer knows these things and lives by faith in this good fight, then there is no problem for the rest. Therefore the wish is that "the Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit". The epistle to the Galatians ends in the same way.

Galatians 6:18

Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

That is a nice close to an epistle that is entirely about the law and the flesh. The law is no good and the flesh neither, and therefore the epistle ends with "grace" instead of law and with "be with your spirit" instead of your flesh.

The same thought we meet at the end of both Timothy epistles too. That is understandable, for both Timothy epistles settle with a life under the law and with the preaching of the law. They propagate instead holding fast to life by faith and by grace. That is particularly charged to those who also serve with the Word within the church.

